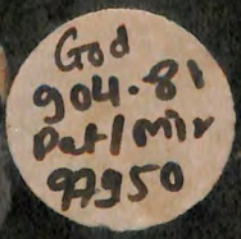
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MIRROR

OF

THE MONTHS.

By Peter George Patmore.

Delectando pariterque monendo.

97950

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR GEO. B. WHITTAKER,
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PREFACE.

As the first few pages of this little volume will sufficiently explain its purport, the reader would not have been troubled with any prefatory remarks, but that, since its commencement, two existing works have been pointed out to me, the plans of which are, in one respect, similar to mine: I allude to the Natural History of the Year, by the late Dr. Aikin and his Son; and The Months, by Mr. Leigh Hunt.

I will not affect any obligations to these agreeable little works, (I mean as a writer); because I feel none; and I mention them here, only to add, that if, on perusing them, either, or both united, had seemed to su-

persede what I proposed to myself in mine, I should immediately have abandoned my intention of writing it. But the abovenamed works, in the first place, relate to country matters exclusively. In the next place, the first of them details those matters in the form of a dry calendar, professedly made up from other calendars which previously existed, and *not* from actual observation; and the second merely throws gleams of its writer's agreeable genius over such of those matters as are most susceptible of that treatment: while both occupy no little portion of their space by quotations, sufficiently appropriate no doubt, but from poets whose works are in everybody's hands.

The MIRROR OF THE MONTHS, therefore, does not interfere with the abovenamed works, nor do they with it. It is in substance, though certainly not in form, a Calendar of the various events and ap-

pearances connected with a Country and a London life, during each successive Month of the Year. And it endeavours to impress upon the memory such of its information as seems best worth retaining, by either placing it in a *picturesque* point of view, or by connecting it with some association, often purely accidental, and not seldom extravagant perhaps, but not the less likely to answer its end, if it succeed in changing mere dry information into amusement.

I may perhaps be allowed to add, in extenuation of the errors and deficiencies of this little volume, that it has been written entirely from the personal observations of one who uses no note-book but that which Nature writes for him in the tablets of his memory; and that when printed books have been turned to at all, it has only been with a view to solve any doubt that he might feel, as to the exact period of any particular event or appearance.

It is also proper to mention, that the four first Months have appeared in a periodical work. In fact, it was the favourable reception they met with there which induced the careful re-writing of them, and the appearance of the whole under their present form.

MIRROR OF THE MONTHS.

JANUARY.

THOSE "Cynthias of a minute," the Months, fleet past us so swiftly, that though we never mistake them while they are present with us, yet the moment any one of them is gone by, we begin to blend the recollection of its features with those of the one which preceded it, or that which has taken its place, and thus confuse them together till we know not "which is which." And then, to mend the matter, when the whole of them have danced their graceful round, hand in hand, before us, not being able to think of either separately, we unite them all together in our imagination, and call them the Past Year; as we gather flowers into a bunch, and call them a bouquet.

Now this should not be. Each one of the sweet sisterhood has features sufficiently marked and distinct to entitle her to a place and a name; and if we mistake these features, and attribute those of any one to any other, it is because we look at them with a cold and uninterested, and therefore an inobservant regard. The lover of Julie could trace fifty minute particulars which were wanting in the portrait of his mistress; though to any one else it would have appeared a likeness: for, to common observers, "a likeness" means merely a something which is not so absolutely *un*like but what it is capable of calling up the idea of the original, to those who are intimately acquainted with it.

Now, I have been for a long while past accustomed to feel towards the common portraits of the Months, of which so many are extant, what St. Preux did towards that of his mistress: all I could ever discover in them was the particulars in which they were *not* like. Still I had never ventured to ask the favour of either of them to sit to me for her picture; having seen that it was the very nature of them to be for ever changing, and that, therefore, to attempt

to *fix* them, would be to trace the outline of a sound, or give the colour of a perfume.

At length, however, my unwearied attendance on them, in their yearly passage past me, and the assiduous court that I have always paid to each and all of their charms, has met with its reward: for there is this especial difference between them and all other mistresses whatever, that, so far from being jealous of each other, their sole ground of complaint against their lovers is, that they do not pay equal devotion to each in her turn; the blooming MAY and the blushing JUNE disdain the vows of those votaries who have not previously wept at the feet of the weeping APRIL, or sighed in unison with the sad breath of MARCH. And it is the same with all the rest. They present a sweet emblem of the *ideal* of a happy and united human family; to each member of which the best proof you can offer that you are worthy of *her* love, is, that you have gained that of her sisters; and to whom the best evidence you can give of being able to love either worthily, is, that you love all. This, I say, has been the kind of court that I have paid to the Months—loving each in all, and all in each. And my reward (in addition to

that of the love itself—which is a "virtue," and therefore "its own reward") has been that each has condescended to watch over and instruct me, while I wrote down the particulars of her brief but immortal life—immortal, because ever renewed, and bearing the seeds of its renewal within itself.

These instructions, however, were accompanied by certain conditions, without complying with which I am not permitted to make the results available to any one but myself. For my own private satisfaction I have liberty to personify the objects of my admiration under any form I please; but if I speak of them to others, they insist on being treated merely as portions or periods of their beautiful parent the YEAR, as *she* is a portion of TIME, the great parent of all things; and that the facts and events I may have to refer to, shall not be essentially connected with *them*, but merely be considered as taking place during the period of their sojourn on the earth respectively.

I confess that this condition seems to savour a little of the fastidious, not to say the affected. And, what is still more certain, it cuts me off from a most fertile source of the poetical and the pic-

turesque. I will frankly add, however, that I am not without my suspicions that this latter may have been the very reason why this condition was imposed upon me; for I am by no means certain that, if I had been left to myself, I should not have substituted cold abstractions and unintelligible fictions (or what would have seemed such to others), in the place of that simple *information* which it is my chief object to convey.

Laying aside, then, if I can, all ornamental figures of speech, I shall proceed to place before the reader, in plain prose, the principal events which happen, in the two worlds of Nature and of Art, during the life and reign of each month; beginning with the nominal beginning of the dynasty, and continuing to present, on the birth-day of each member of it, a record of the beauties which she brings in her train, and the good deeds which she either inspires or performs.

Hail! then, hail to thee, JANUARY!—all hail! cold and wintry as thou art, if it be but in virtue of thy first day. THE DAY, as the French call it, par excellence; "Le jour de l'an." Come about me, all ye little schoolboys, that have escaped from the unnatural thraldom of your

taskwork—come crowding about me, with your untamed hearts shouting in your unmodulated voices, and your happy spirits dancing an untaught measure in your eyes! Come, and help me to speak the praises of New Year's Day!—*your* day—one of the three which have, of late, become yours almost exclusively, and which have bettered you, and been bettered themselves, by the change. Christmas-day, which *was*; New-year's-day, which *is*; and Twelfth-day, which *is to be*; let us compel them all three into our presence—with a whisk of our imaginative wand convert them into one, as the conjurer does his three glittering balls—and then enjoy them all together,—with their dressings, and coachings, and visitings, and greetings, and gifts, and "many happy returns"—with their plum-puddings, and mince-pies, and twelfth cakes, and neguses—with their forfeits, and fortune-tellings, and blind-man's-buffs, and snap-dragons, and sittings up to supper—with their pantomimes, and panoramas, and new penknives, and pastrycooks' shops—in short, with their endless round of ever new nothings, the absence of a relish for which is but ill supplied, in after life, by that feverish hungering and thirsting after excitement, which

usurp without filling its place. Oh! that I might enjoy those nothings once again in fact, as I can in fancy! But I fear the wish is worse than an idle one; for it not only may not be, but it ought not to be. "We cannot have our cake and eat it too," as the vulgar somewhat vulgarly, but not the less shrewdly, express it. And this is as it should be; for if we could, it would neither be worth the eating nor the having.

If the reader complains that this is not the sober style which I just now promised to maintain, I cannot help it. Besides, it was my subject that spoke then, not myself; and it spoke to those who are too happy to be wise, and to whom, therefore, if it were to speak wisely, it might as well not speak at all. Let them alone for awhile, and they will grow too wise to be happy; and then they may be disposed and at leisure to listen to reason.

In sober sadness, then, if the reader so wills it, and after the approved manner of modern moral discourses, the subject before us may be regarded under three distinct points of view; namely, January in London—January in the

country—and January in general. And first, of the first.

Now—but before I proceed further, let me bespeak the reader's indulgence at least, if not his favour, towards this everlasting monosyllable, "Now," to which my betters have, from time to time, been so much indebted, and on which I shall be compelled to place so much dependence in this my present undertaking. It is the pass word, the "open sesame," that must remove from before me all lets and impediments; it is the charm that will alternately put to silence my imagination when it may be disposed to infringe on the office of my memory, and awaken my memory when it is inclined to sleep; in fact, it is a monosyllable of infinite avail, and for which, on this as on many other occasions, no substitute can be found in our own or any other language; and if I approve, above all other proverbs, that which says, "There's nothing like the time present," it is partly because "the time present" is but a periphrasis for Now!

Now, then, the cloudy canopy of sea-coal smoke that hangs over London, and crowns her queen of capitals, floats thick and threefold; for

fires and feastings are rife, and every body is either "out" or "at home," every night.

Now schoolboys don't know what to do with themselves till dinner-time; for the good old days of frost and snow, and fairs on the Thames, and furred gloves, and skaiting on the canals, and sliding on the kennels, are gone by; and for any thing in the shape of winter one might as well live in Italy at once!

Now, on the evening of Twelfth-day, mischievous maid-servants pin elderly people together at the windows of pastry-cooks' shops, thinking them "weeds that have no business there."

Now, if a frosty day or two does happen to pay us a flying visit, on its way home to the North Pole, how the little boys make slides on the pathways, for lack of ponds, and, it may be, trip up an occasional housekeeper just as he steps out of his own door; who forthwith vows vengeance, in the shape of ashes, on all the slides in his neighbourhood; not, doubtless, out of vexation at his own mishap, and revenge against the petty perpetrators of it, but purely to avert the like from others!

Now, Bond Street begins to be conscious of

carriages; two or three people are occasionally seen wandering through the Western Bazaar; and the Soho Ditto is so thronged, that Mr. Trotter begins to think of issuing another decree against the inroads of single gentlemen.

Now, linen drapers begin to "sell off" their stock at "fifty per cent. under prime cost," and continue so doing all the rest of the year; every article of which will be found, on inspection, to be of "the last new pattern," and to have been "only had in that morning!"

Now, oranges are eaten in the dress-circle of the great theatres, and inquiries are propounded there, whether "that gentleman in black" (meaning Hamlet) "is Harlequin?" And laughs, and "La! Mammas!" resound thence to the remotest corners of the house; and "the gods" make merry during the play, in order that they may be at leisure to listen to the pantomime; and Mr. Farley is consequently in his glory, and Mr. Grimaldi is a great man; as, indeed, when is he not?

Now, newspapers teem with twice-ten-times-told tales of haunted houses, and great sea-snakes, and mermaids; and a murder is worth a Jew's eye to them; for "the House does not

meet for the despatch of business till the fifth of February." And great and grievous are the lamentations that are heard in the said newspapers, over the lateness of the London season, and its detrimental effects on the interests of the metropolis; but they forget to add—"erratum—for *metropolis*, read *newspapers*."

Now, Moore's Almanack holds "sole sovereign sway and mastery" among the readers of that class of literature; for there has not yet been time to nullify any of its predictions; not even that which says, "we may expect some frost and snow about this period."

Finally, now periodical works put on their best attire; the old ones expressing their determination to become new, and the new ones to become old; and each makes a point of putting forth the first of some pleasant series of essays (such as this, for example!), which cannot fail to fix the most fugitive of readers, and make him her own for another twelve months at least.

Let us now repair to the country. "The country in January" has but a dreary sound, to those who go into "the country" only that they may not be seen "in town." But to those who seek the country for the same reason that they

seek London, namely, for the good that is to be found there, the one has at least as many attractions as the other, at any given period of the year. Let me add, however, that if there *is* a particular period when the country puts forth fewer of her attractions than at any other, it is this; probably to try who are her real lovers, and who are only false flatterers, and to treat them accordingly. And yet—

Now, the trees, denuded of their gay attire, spread forth their thousand branches against the gray sky, and present as endless a variety of form and feature for study and observation, as they did when dressed in all the flaunting fashions of midsummer. Now, too, their voices are silent, and their forms are motionless, even when the wind is among them; so that the low plaintive piping of the robin-redbreast can be heard, and his hiding-place detected by the sound of his slim feet alighting on the fallen leaves. Or now, grown bolder as the skies become more inclement, he flits before you from twig to twig silently, like a winged thought; or like the brown and crimson leaf of a cherry-tree, blown about by the wind; or perches himself by your side, and looks sidelong in

your face, pertly, and yet imploringly,—as much as to say, "though I do need your aid just now, and would condescend to accept a crum from your hand, yet I'm still your betters, for I'm still a bird."

Now, one of the most beautiful sights on which the eye can open occasionally presents itself: we saw the shades of evening fall upon a waste expanse of brown earth, shorn hedge-rows, bare branches, and miry roads, interspersed here and there with a patch of dull melancholy green. But when we are awakened by the late dawning of the morning, and think to look forth upon the same, what a bright pomp greets us! What a white pageantry! It is as if the fleecy clouds that float about the sun at midsummer had descended upon the earth, and clothed it in their beauty! Every object we look upon is strange and yet familiar to us—"another, yet the same!" And the whole affects us like a vision of the night, which we are half conscious *is* a vision: we know that it is *there*, and yet we know not how long it may remain there, since a motion may change it, or a breath melt it away. And what a mysterious stillness reigns over all! A white silence! Even the "clouted shoon" of

the early peasant is not heard; and the robin, as he hops from twig to twig with undecided wing, and shakes down a feathery shower as he goes, hushes his low whistle in wonder at the unaccustomed scene!

Now, the labour of the husbandman is, for once in the year, at a stand; and he haunts the alehouse fire, or lolls listlessly over the half-door of the village smithy, and watches the progress of the labour which he unconsciously envies; tasting for once in his life (without knowing it) the bitterness of that *ennui* which he begrudges to his betters.

Now, melancholy-looking men wander "by twos and threes" through market-towns, with their faces as blue as the aprons that are twisted round their waists; their ineffectual rakes resting on their shoulders, and a withered cabbage hoisted upon a pole; and sing out their doleful petition of "Pray remember the poor gardeners, who can get no work!"

Now, the passengers outside the Cheltenham night-coach look wistfully at the Witney blanket-mills as they pass, and meditate on the merits of a warm bed.

Now, people of fashion, who cannot think of

coming to their homes in town so early in the season, and will not think of remaining at their homes in the country so late, seek out spots on the seashore which have the merit of being neither town *nor* country, and practise patience there (as Timon of Athens did), en attendant the London winter, which is ordered to commence about the first week in spring, and end at midsummer!

But we are forgetting the garden all this while; which must not be; for Nature does not. Though the gardener can find little to do in it, *she* is ever at work there, and ever with a wise hand, and graceful as wise. The wintry winds of December having shaken down the last lingering leaves from the trees, the final labour of the gardener was employed in making all trim and clean; in turning up the dark earth, to give it air; pruning off the superfluous produce of summer; and gathering away the worn-out attire that the perennial flowers leave behind them, when they sink into the earth to seek their winter home, as Harlequin and Columbine, in the pantomimes, sometimes slip down through a trap-door, and cheat their silly pursuers by leaving their vacant dresses standing erect behind them.

All being left trim and orderly for the coming

on of the new year, Now (to resume our friendly monosyllable) all the processes of nature for the renewal of her favoured race, the flowers, may be more aptly observed than at any other period. Still, therefore, however desolate a scene the garden may present to the *general* gaze, a particular examination of it is full of interest, and interest that is not the less valuable for its depending chiefly on the imagination.

Now, the bloom-buds of the fruit trees, which the late leaves of autumn had concealed from the view, stand confessed, upon the otherwise bare branches, and, dressed in their patent wind-and-water-proof coats, brave the utmost severity of the season,—their hard unpromising outsides, compared with the forms of beauty which they contain, reminding us of their friends the butterflies when in the chrysalis state.

Now, the perennials, having slipped off their summer robes, and retired to their subterranean sleeping-rooms, just permit the tops of their naked heads to peep above the ground, to warn the labourer from disturbing their annual repose.

Now, the smooth-leaved and tender-stemmed Rose of China hangs its pale, scentless, artificial-looking flowers upon the cheek of Winter; re-

minding us of the last faint bloom upon the face of a fading beauty, or the hectic of disease on that of a dying one; and a few chrysanthemums still linger, the wreck of the past year,—their various coloured stars looking like faded imitations of the gay, glaring China-aster.

Now, too,—first evidences of the revivifying principle of the new-born year—for all that we have hitherto noticed are but lingering remnants of the old—Now, the golden and blue crocuses peep up their pointed coronals from amidst their guarding palisades of green and gray leaves, that they may be ready to come forth at the call of the first February sun that looks warmly upon them; and perchance one here and there, bolder than the rest, has started fairly out of the earth already, and half opened her trim form, pretending to have mistaken the true time; as a forward school-miss will occasionally be seen coquetting with a smart cornet, before she has been regularly produced,—as if she did not know that there was "any harm in it."

We are now to consider the pretensions of January in general.

When the palm of merit is to be awarded among the Months, it is usual to assign it to

May by acclamation. But if the claim depends on the sum of delight which each witnesses or brings with her, I doubt if January should not bear the bell from her more blooming sister, if it were only in virtue of her share in the aforenamed festivities of the Christmas Holidays. And then, what a happy influence does she not exercise on all the rest of the Year, by the family meetings she brings about, and by the kindling and renewing of the social affections that grow out of, and are chiefly dependent on these. And what sweet remembrances and associations does she not scatter before her, through all the time to come, by her gifts—the "new year's gifts!" *Christmas-boxes* (as they are called) are but sordid boons in comparison of these; they are mere money paid for mere services rendered or expected; wages for work done and performed; barterings of value for value; offerings of the pocket to the pocket. But new year's gifts are offerings of the affections to the affections—of the heart to the heart. The value of the first depends purely on themselves; and the gratitude (such as it is) which they call forth, is measured by the gross amount of that value. But the others owe their value to the wishes and in-

tentions of the giver; and the gratitude *they* call forth springs from the affections of the receiver.

And then, who can see a New Year open upon him, without being better for the prospect—without making sundry wise reflections (for *any* reflections on this subject *must* be comparatively wise ones) on the step he is about to take towards the goal of his being? Every first of January that we arrive at, is an imaginary mile-stone on the turnpike track of human life; at once a resting-place for thought and meditation, and a starting point for fresh exertion in the performance of our journey. The man who does not at least *propose to himself* to be better *this* year than he was last, must be either very good or very bad indeed! And only to *propose* to be better, is something; if nothing else it is an acknowledgment of our *need* to be so,—which is the first step towards amendment. But in fact, to propose to oneself to do well, is in some sort to *do* well, positively; for there is no such thing as a stationary point in human endeavours; he who is not worse to-day than he was yesterday, is better; and he who is not better, is worse.

The very name of January, from Janus, two-faced, "looking before and after," indicates the

reflective propensities which she encourages, and which when duly exercised cannot fail to lead to good.

And then January is the youngest of the yearly brood, and therefore *prima facie* the best; for I protest most strenuously against the comparative age which Chaucer (I think) has assigned to this month by implication, when he compares an old husband and a young wife to "January and June." These poets will sacrifice any thing to alliteration, even abstract truth. I am sorry to say this of Chaucer, whose poetry is more of "a true thing" than that of any other, always excepting Mr. Crabbe's, which is too much of a true thing. And nobody knew better than Chaucer the respective merits of the Months, and the peculiar qualities and characteristics which appertain to each. But, I repeat, alliteration is the Scylla and Charybdis united of all who embark on the perilous ocean of poetry; and that Chaucer himself chose occasionally to "listen to the voice of the charmer, charmed she never so *un*wisely," the above example affords sufficient proof. I am afraid poets themselves are too self-opiniated people to make it worth while for me to warn *them* on this point; but I

hereby pray all prose writers pertinaciously to avoid so pernicious a practice. This, however, by the by.

I need scarcely accumulate other arguments and examples to show that my favourite January deserves to rank first among the Months in merit, as she does in place. But lest doubters should still remain, I will add, ask the makers-out of annual accounts whether any month can compare with January, since then they may begin to *hope* for a settlement, and may even in some cases venture to *ask* for it; which latter is a comfort that has been denied them during all the rest of the year; besides its being a remote step towards the said settlement. And on the other hand, ask the contractors of annual accounts whether January is not the best of all possible months, since then they may begin to *order* afresh, with the prospect of a whole year's impunity. The answers to these two questions must of course decide the point, since the two classes of persons to whom they are addressed include the whole adult(crated) population of these commercial realms.

FEBRUARY.

Some one has said of the Scotch novels, that that is the best which we happen to have perused last. It is thus that I estimate the relative value and virtue of the Months. The one which happens to be present with me is sure to be that one which I happen to like better than any of the others. I lately insisted on the supremacy of January on various accounts. Now I have a similar claim to put in in favour of the next in succession. And it shall go hard but I will prove, to the entire satisfaction of all whom it may concern, that each in her turn is, beyond comparison, the "wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best." Indeed I doubt whether, on consideration, any one (but a Scotch philosopher) will be inclined to dispute the truth of this, even as a logical proposition, much less as a sentiment. The time present is the best of all possible times, *because* it is present—because it *is*—because it

is something; whereas all other times are nothing. The time present, therefore, is essentially better than any other time, in the proportion of something to nothing. I hope this be logic; or metaphysics at the least. If the reader determines otherwise, "he may kill the next Percy himself!" In the mean time (and *that*, by the by, is the best time next to the present, in virtue of its skill in connecting together two refractory periods)—in the mean time, let us search for another and a better reason why every one of the Months is, in its turn, the best. The cleverest Scotch philosopher that ever lived has said, in a memoir of his own life, that a man had better be born with a disposition to look on the bright side of things, than to an estate of ten thousand a year. He might have gone further, and said that the disposition to which he alludes is worth almost as much to a man as being compelled and able to earn an honest livelihood by the sweat of his brow! Nay, he might almost have asserted that, with such a disposition, a man may chance to be happy even though he be born to an estate of *twenty* thousand a year! But I, not being (thank my stars!) a Scotch or any other philosopher, will venture

to go still farther, and say, that to be able to look at things *as they are*, is best of all. To him who can do this, all is as it should be—all things work together for good—whatever is, is right. To him who can do this, the present time is all-sufficient, or rather it is all in all; for if he cannot enjoy any other, it is because no other is susceptible of being enjoyed, except through the medium of the present.

From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step. Consequently, from the ridiculous to the sublime must be about the same distance. In other words, the transition from metaphysics to love is easy; as Mr. Coleridge's writings can amply testify. Hail! then, February! month and mother of Love! Not that love which requires the sun of midsummer to foster it into life; and is so restless and fugitive that nothing can hold it but bands made of bright eye-beams; and so dainty that it must be fed on rose-leaves; and so proud and fantastical that bowers of jasmine and honeysuckle are not good enough for it to dwell in, or the green turf soft enough for its feet to press, but it must sit beneath silken canopies, and tread on Turkey carpets, and breathe the breath of pastiles; and

so chilly that it must pass all its nights within a gentle bosom, or it dies. Not *this* love; but its infant cousin, that starts into life on cold Saint Valentine's morning, and sits by the fire rocking its own cradle, and listening all day long for the "sweet thunder" of the twopenny postman's knock!—Hail! February! Virgin mother of this love of all loves, which dies almost the day that it is born, and yet leaves the odour of its sweetness upon the whole after life of those who were not too wise to admit it for a moment to their embraces!

The sage reader must not begrudge me these innocent little rhapsodies. He must remember that all are not so wise and staid as he; and as in January he permitted me to be, for a moment, a ranting schoolboy, so in February he must not object to my reminding him that there are such persons in the world as young ladies who have not yet finished their education! He must not insist that, "because *he* is virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale." Besides, to be candid, I do not see that it is quite fair to complain of us anonymous writers, even if we do occasionally insinuate into our lucubrations a few lines that are directed to our own exclusive satisfaction.

In fact, the privilege of writing nonsense now and then is the sweetest source of our emolument, and one which, if our readers attempt to cut us off from altogether, they may rest assured that we shall very soon *strike*, and demand higher pay in other respects than those only true patrons of literature, the booksellers, can afford to give; for if a man is always to write sense and reason, he might as well turn *author* at once,—which we "gentlemen who write with ease" flatter ourselves that none of us are. I put it to the candour of Mr. Whittaker himself, whether, if I would consent to place my name in the corner of each of these portraits of the Months (*so and so pinxit*, 1825), he would not willingly give me double price for them, and reckon upon remunerating himself from the purchaser in proportion? Then let him use his interest with the critics to allow me but half a page of nonsense in each paper, and I consent to forego all this profit. As for the fame, I am content to leave posterity in the lurch, and live only till I die.

Having now expended *my* portion of this paper, I shall henceforth willingly "keep bounds" till the next month; to which end, however, I must

be permitted to call in the aid of my able suggestive, Now.

Now, the Christmas holidays are over, and all the snow in Russia could not make the first Monday in this month look any other than *black*, in the home-loving eyes of little schoolboys; and the streets of London are once more evacuated of happy wondering faces, that look any way but straight before them; and sobs are heard, and sorrowful faces seen to issue from sundry postchaises that carry sixteen inside, exclusive of cakes and boxes; and theatres are no longer conscious of unconscious *eclats de rire*, but the whole audience is like Mr. Wordsworth's cloud, "which moveth altogether, if it move at all."

En revanche, now newspaper editors begin to think of disporting themselves; for the great national school for "children of a larger growth" is met in Saint Stephen's Chapel, "for the *despatch* of business" and of time; and consequently newspapers have become a nonentity; and those writers who are "constant readers" find their occupation gone.

Now, the stones of Bond Street dance for joy, while they "prate of the whereabout" of innumerable wheels; which latter are so happy to

meet again after a long absence, that they rush into each other's embraces, "wheel within wheel," and there's no getting them asunder.

Now, the Italian Opera is open, and the house is full; but if asked on the subject, you may safely say that "nobody was there;" for the *flats* that you meet with in the pit evidently indicate that their wearers appertain to certain counters and counting-houses in the city, or serve those that do—having "received orders" for the Opera in the way of their business.

Now, a sudden thaw, after a week's frost, puts the pedestrians of Cheapside into a pretty pickle.

Now, the *trottoir* of St. James's Street begins to know itself again; the steps of Raggett's are proud of being pressed by right honourable feet; and *the dandies' watch-tower* is once more peopled with playful peers, peering after beautiful frailties in furred pelisses.

Now, on fine Sundays, the citizens and their wives begin to hie them to Hyde Park, and having attained Wellington Walk, fancy that there is not more than two pins to choose between them and their betters on the other side the rail; while these latter, having come abroad

to take the air (of the insides of their carriages), and kill the time, and cure the vapours, permit inquisitive equestrians to gaze at them through plate-glass, and fancy, not without reason, that they look like flowers seen through flowing water: Lady O——, for example, like an overblown rose; Lady H——, like a painted-lady pea; the Countess of B——, like a newly-opened apple-blossom; and her demure-looking little sister beside her, like a *prim*-rose.

Now, winter being only on the wane, and spring only on the approach, Fashion, for once in the year, begins to feel herself in a state of interregnum, and her ministers, the milliners and tailors, don't know what to think. Mrs. Bean shakes her head like Lord Burleigh, and declines to determine as to what may be the fate of future waists; and Mr. Stultz is equally cautious of committing himself in the affair of collars; and both agree in coming to the same conclusion with the statesman in Tom Thumb, that, "as near as they can guess, they cannot tell!" Now, therefore, the fashionable shops are shorn of their beams, and none can show wares that are strictly in season, except the stationer's. But *his*, which for all the rest of the year is dullest of the dull,

is now, for the first fourteen days, gayest of the gay; for here the poetry of love, and the love of poetry, are displayed under all possible and impossible forms and metaphors,—from little cupids creeping out of cabbage-roses, to large overgrown hearts stuffed with double-headed arrows, and uttering piteous complaints in verse, while they fry in their own flames. And this brings us safe back to the point from which we somewhat prematurely set out; for Now, on good Saint Valentine's eve, all the rising generation of this metropolis, who feel that they have reached the age of *in*discretion, think it full time for them to fall in love, or be fallen in love with. Accordingly, infinite are the crow-quills that move mincingly between embossed margins,

"And those *rhyme* now who never rhymed before,
And those who always rhymed now rhyme the more;"

to the utter dismay of the newly-appointed twopenny postman the next morning; who curses Saint Valentine almost as bitterly as does, in her secret heart, yonder sulky sempstress, who has not been called upon for a single twopence out of all the two hundred thousand * extra ones

* This was the number of letters that passed through the Twopenny Post-Office on the 14th of February, 1821, in addition to the usual daily average.—See the official returns.

that have been drawn from willing pockets, and dropped into canvas bags, on this eventful day. She may take my word for it that the said sulkiness, which has some show of reason in it to-day, is in the habit of visiting her pretty face oftener than it is called for. If it were not so, she would not have had cause for it now.

But good Bishop Valentine is a pluralist, and holds another see besides that of London:

> "All the air is his diocese,
> And all the chirping choristers
> And other birds are his parishioners:
> He marries every year
> The lyrique lark, and the grave whispering dove;
> The sparrow, that neglects his life for love;
> The household bird with the red stomacher;
> He makes the blackbird speed as soon
> As doth the goldfinch or the halcyon."

Let us be off to the country without more ado; for who can stay in London in the face of such epithets as these, that seem to compel us, with their sweet magic, to go in search of the sounds and sights that they characterise? "The *lyric* lark!" Why a modern poet might live for a whole season on that one epithet! Nay, there be those that *have* lived on it for a longer time, perhaps without knowing that it did not belong to them!—"The sparrow *that neglects his life*

for love!" "The *household* bird, *with the red stomacher!*"—That a poet who could write in this manner, for pages together, should be almost entirely unknown to modern *readers* (except to those of a late number of the Retrospective Review), would be somewhat astonishing, if it were not for the consideration that he is so well known to modern *writers!* It would be doing both parties justice if some one would point out a few of the *coincidences* that occur between them. In the mean time, *we* shall be doing better in looking abroad for ourselves into that nature to which *he* looked, and seeing what she offers worthy of particular observation, in the course of this last month of winter in the Country, though it is the first in London. Not that we shall, as yet, find much to attract our attention in regard to the movements of the above-named "parishioners" of good Bishop Valentine; for though he gives them full authority to marry now as soon as they please, Frost forbids the bans for the present; and when there is no love going forward in the feathered world, there is little or no singing. On the contrary, even the pert sparrows still go moping and sulking about silently, or sit with ruffled plumes and drooping wings, upon the

bare branches, watching all day long for their scanty dole of crums, and thinking of nothing else. The "lyric lark," indeed, may already be heard; the thrush and blackbird begin to practise their spring notes faintly; and the yellow-hammer, the chaffinch, and the wren, utter a single stanza or so, at long intervals: but all this can scarcely be called singing, but rather talking of it; for

> "I shall not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau
> If birds confabulate, or no;"

but shall determine at once that they do; at least if any dependence can be placed on eyes and ears. In short, the only bird that really *is* a bird this month, is he "with the red stomacher." And he, with his low plaintive piping, his silent spirit-like motions, and sudden and mysterious appearings and disappearings,—coming in an instant before us no one can tell whence, and going as silently and as suddenly no one knows whither,—and, above all, his sweet and pert, yet timid confidence in man—all these, to those who are happy enough to have nothing better to do than to watch them, almost make up for the absence of all his blithe brethren.

As for the general face of nature, we shall

find *that* in much the same apparent state as we left it last month. And we must look into its individual features very minutely, if we would discover any change even in them. The trees are still utterly bare; the skies are cold and gray; the paths and ways are, for the most part, dank and miry; and the air is either damp and clinging, or bitter, eager, and shrewd. But then what days of soft air and sunshine, and unbroken blue sky, do now and then intervene, and transport us into the very heart of May, and make us look about and wonder what is become of the green leaves and the flowers!

Now, hard frosts, if they come at all, are followed by sudden thaws; and now, therefore, if ever, the mysterious old song of our school days stands a chance of being verified, which sings of

> "Three children sliding on the ice
> All on a *summer's* day!"

Now, the labour of the husbandman recommences; and it is pleasant to watch (from your library window) the plough-team moving almost imperceptibly along, upon the distant upland that the bare trees have disclosed to you. And now, by the way, if you are wise, you will get acquainted with all the little spots that are thus,

by the bareness of the trees, laid open to you, in order that, when the summer comes, and you cannot *look at* them, you may be able to *see* them still.

But we must not neglect the garden; for though "Nature's journeymen," the gardeners, are undergoing an ignoble leisure this month, it is not so with Nature herself. She is as busy as ever, if not openly and obviously, secretly, and in the hearts of her sweet subjects the flowers; stirring them up to that rich rivalry of beauty which is to greet the first footsteps of Spring, and teaching them to prepare themselves for her advent, as young maidens prepare, months beforehand, for the marriage festival of some dear friend.

If the flowers think and feel (and he who dares to say that they do not is either a fool or a philosopher—let him choose between the imputations!)—if the flowers think and feel, what a commotion must be working within their silent hearts, when the pinions of Winter begin to grow, and indicate that he is at least meditating his flight! Then do *they*, too, begin to meditate on May-day, and think on the delight with which they shall once more breathe the fresh air, when

they have leave to escape from their subterranean prisons; for now, towards the latter end of this month, they are all of them at least awake from their winter slumbers, and most are busily working at their gay toilets, and weaving their fantastic robes, and shaping their trim forms, and distilling their rich essences, and, in short, getting ready in all things, that they may be duly prepared to join the bright procession of beauty that is to greet and glorify the annual coming on of their sovereign lady, the Spring. It is true none of all this can be seen. But what a race should we be, if we knew and cared to know of nothing, but what we can see and prove!

> "Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,
> He is a slave—the meanest you can meet."

But there is much going on in the garden now that may be seen by "the naked eye" of those who carefully look for it. The bloom-buds of the shrubs and fruit-trees are obviously swelling; and the leaves of the lilac are ready to burst forth at the first favourable call. The laurestinus still braves the winds and the frosts, and blooms in blithe defiance of them. So does the China rose, but meekly, and like a maiden who *will* not droop though her lover *be* away; because she

knows that he is true to her, and will soon return.

Now, too, the visible heralds of Spring approach, but do not appear; or rather, they appear, but have not yet put on their gorgeous tabards or surcoats of many colours. The tulips are but just showing themselves, shrouded closely in their sheltering alcoves of dull green. The hyacinths, too, have sent up their trim fences of green, and are just peeping up from the midst of them in their green veils,—the cheek of each flower-bud pressed and clustering against that of its fellow, like a host of little heads peeping out from the porch of an ivy-bound cottage, as the London coach passes.

Now, too, those pretty orphans, the crocuses and snowdrops—those foundlings, that belong neither to Winter nor Spring—show their modest faces scarcely an inch above the dark earth, as if they were afraid to rise from it, lest a stray March wind should whistle them away.

Finally, now appear, towards the latter end of the month, those flowers that actually belong to Spring—that do not either herald her approach, or follow in her train, but are in fact a part of her, and prove that she is virtually with us,

though she chooses to remain incognita for a time. The prettiest and most piquant of these in appearance are the brilliant little Hepaticas, crowding up in sparkling companies from the midst of their dark ivy-like leaves, and looking more like gems than flowers.

The next in brilliance are the Anemonies, as gay in their colours, and more various, but not so profuse of their charms as their pretty relation Hepatica, and more jealous of each other's beauty; as well they may, for what flower can vie with them for exquisite delicacy of hue and elegant fragility?

The primroses, polyanthuses, and daisies that venture to show themselves this month, we will not greet; not because we are not even more pleased to see them than their gayer and more gaudy rivals; but the truth is, that they have no real claim upon our attention till next month, as their pale hues and weakly forms evidently indicate.

In taking leave of the Country for this month, let me not forget to mention that sure "prophet of delight and mirth," the Common Pilewort, or Lesser Celandine; about which (and what more can I say to interest the reader in its favour?)

Mr. Wordsworth has written two whole poems. Its little yellow stars may now be seen gemming the woodsides, when all around is cold, comfortless, and dead.

I have said that I designed to prove this to be the best of all possible months. Is the reader still incredulous as to its surpassing merits? Then be it known to him that I should insist on its supremacy, if it were only in virtue of *one* birthday which it includes: and one that the reader would never guess, for the best of all reasons. It is *not* that of "the wisest of mankind," Lord Bacon, on the third; or of "the starry Galileo," on the nineteenth; or of the "matchless master of high sounds," Handel, on the twenty-fourth. True February does include all these memorable days, and let it be valued accordingly. But it includes another day, which is worth them all *to me*, since it gave to the world, the narrow world of some half dozen loving hearts, one who is wiser in her simplicity than the first of the abovenamed, since the results of that wisdom are virtue and happiness; who is more far-darting in her mental glance than the second, inasmuch as an instinctive *sentiment* of the truth is more infallible

than the clearest *perception* of it; and whose every thought and look and motion are more "softly sweet" and musical than all the "Lydian measures" of the third; and, deprived of whom, those who have once been accustomed to live within the light of her countenance would find all the wisdom of the first to be foolishness, all the stars of the second dark, and all the harmony of the third worse than discord.

Gentlest of readers (for I had need have such), pardon me this one rhapsody, and I promise to be as "sobersuited" as the editor of an Encyclopedia, for this two months to come. Nothing, not even the nightingale's song in the last week in April, shall move me from my propriety. But I will candidly confess, that the effects of May-day morning are more than I can venture to answer for. Even the chimney-sweepers are allowed to disport themselves then; so that when that arrives, there's no knowing what may happen.

MARCH.

If there be a Month the aspect of which is less amiable, and its manners and habits less prepossessing, than those of all the rest (which I am loath to admit), that month is March. The burning heats of midsummer (when they shall come to us at the prophetic call of the Quarterly Reviewers—which they never will) we shall find no difficulty in bearing; and the frosts and snows of December and January are as welcome, to those who know their value, as the flowers in May. Nay—the so much vituperated fogs of November I by no means set my face against; on the contrary, I have a kind of appetite for them, both corporeal and mental; as I shall prove, and endeavour to justify in its due place.

In fact, and by the by, November is a month that has not been fairly dealt by; and, for my part, I think it should by no means have been fixed upon as that which is *par excellence* the month best adapted to hang and drown oneself in;—seeing that, to a wise man, *that* should never be an affair of atmosphere. But if a month must be set apart for such a proces, (on the same principle which determines that we are bound to *begin* our worldly concerns on a particular day —viz. Saturday—and would therefore, by parity of reasoning, call upon us to end them with a similar view to times and seasons), let that month be henceforth March; for it has, at this present writing, no one characteristic by which to designate it,—being neither Spring, Summer, Autumn, nor Winter, but only March.

But what I particularly object to in March is its winds. They say

> "March winds and April showers
> Bring forth May flowers."

But I doubt the fact. They may *call* them forth, perhaps,—whistling over the roofs of their subterraneous dwellings, to let them know that Winter is past and gone. Or, in our disposition

to " turn diseases to commodities," let us regard them as the expectant damsel does the sound of the mail coach horn that whisks through the village, as she lies in bed at midnight, and tells her that *to-morrow* she may look for a letter from her absent swain.

The only other express and specific reason why I object to March, is that she drives hares mad; which is a great fault. But be all this as it may, she is still fraught with merits; and let us proceed, without more ado, to point out a few of them. And first of the country;—to which, by the way, I have not hitherto allowed its due supremacy—for

" God made the Country, but man made the Town."

Now, then, even the winds of March, notwithstanding all that we have insinuated in their disfavour, are far from being virtueless; for they come careering over our fields, and roads, and pathways, and while they dry up the damps that the thaws had let loose, and the previous frosts had prevented from sinking into the earth, " pipe to the spirit ditties" the words of which tell tales of the forthcoming flowers. And not only so, but occasionally they are caught bearing away

upon their rough wings the mingled odours of violet and daffodil, both of which have already ventured to

> "Come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty."

The general face of nature has not much changed in appearance since we left it in February; though its internal economy has made an important step in advance. The sap is alive in the seemingly sleeping trunks that every where surround us, and is beginning to mount slowly to its destination; and the embryo blooms are almost visibly struggling towards light and life, beneath their rough, unpromising outer coats—unpromising to the idle, the unthinking, and the inobservant; but to the eye that "can see Othello's visage in his mind," bright and beautiful, in virtue of the brightness and the beauty that they cover, but not conceal. Now, too, the dark earth becomes soft and tractable, and yields to the kindly constraint that calls upon it to teem with new life,—crumbling to the touch, that it may the better clasp in its fragrant bosom the rudiments of that gay, but ephemeral creation which are born with the spring, only "to run

their race rejoicing" into the lap of summer, and there yield up their sweet breath, a willing incense at the shrine of that nature the spirit of which is endless constancy growing out of endless change. Must I tell the reader this in plainer prose?—Now, then, is the time to sow the seeds of most of the annual flowering plants; particularly of those which we all know and love—such as Sweet Pea, the most feminine of flowers, that must have a kind hand to tend its youth, and a supporting arm to cling to in its maturity, or it grovels in the dust, and straggles away into an unsightly weed; and Mignionette, with a name as sweet as its breath,—that loves "within a gentle bosom to be laid," and makes haste to die there, lest its white lodging should be changed; and Larkspur, trim, gay, and bold, the gallant of the garden; and Lupines, blue, and yellow, and rose coloured, with their winged flowers hovering above their starry leaves; and a host of others, that we must try to characterise as they come in turn before us.

Now, too, we have some of the bulbous rooted flowers at their best, particularly the pretty Crocuses, yellow, blue, striped, and white; while

others, the Narcissus, Hyacinths, and Tulips, are visibly hastening towards their perfection.

Those spring flowers, too, which ventured to show themselves last month before they had well recovered from their winter trance, have now grown bold in their renewed strength, and look the winds in the face fearlessly. Perhaps the most poetical of these, because the most pathetic in their pale and pining beauty, are the Primroses. Their bold and bright-eyed relatives the Polyanthuses (no two alike) are also now all on the look out for lovers, among the bees that the warm sunny mornings already begin to call forth.

These, with the still prevailing Hepaticas and Anemonies, the Daisies that start up singly here and there, an early Wall-flower, the pretty pink rods of the Mezereon, and (in the woods) the lovely Wind-flower, or white Wood-anemone, constitute the principal wealth of this preparatory month.

Now, too, the tender green of spring first begins to peep forth from the straggling branches of the hedge-row Elder, the trim Lilac, and the thin threads of the stream enamoured Willow;

the first to put on its spring clothing, and the last to leave it off. And if we look into the kitchen garden, there too we may chance to find those forest trees in miniature, the Gooseberries and Currants, letting their leaves and blossoms (both of a colour) look forth together, hand in hand, in search of the April sun before it arrives, as the lark mounts upward to seek for it before it has risen in the morning. It will be well if these early adventurers-forth do not encounter a cutting easterly blast; or still worse, a deceitful breeze, that tempts them to its embraces by its milder breath, only to shower diseases upon them. But if they *will* be out on the watch for Spring before she calls them, they must be content to take their chance.

NOW, about the middle of the month, a strange commotion may be seen and heard among the winged creatures, portending momentous matters. The lark is high up in the cold air before day-light; and his chosen mistress is listening to him down among the dank grass, with the dew still upon her unshaken wing. The Robin, too, has left off, for a brief season, his low plaintive piping, which it must be confessed was poured

forth for his own exclusive satisfaction, and, reckoning on his spruce looks and sparkling eyes, issues his quick peremptory love-call, in a somewhat ungallant and husband-like manner.

The Sparrows, who have lately been sulking silently about from tree to tree, with ruffled plumes and drooping wings, now spruce themselves up till they do not look half their former size; and if it were not pairing-time, one might fancy that there was more of war than of love in their noisy squabblings. But the crouching forms, quivering wings, and murmuring bills, of yonder pair that have quitted for a moment the clamorous cabal, can indicate the movements of but *one* passion.

But we must leave the feathered tribe for the present:

"Sacred be love from sight, whate'er it is."

We shall have many opportunities of observing their pretty ways hereafter.

Now, also, the Ants (with whom we shall have a crow to pick by and by) first begin to show themselves from their subterranean sleeping-rooms; those winged abortions, the Bats, per-

plex the eyes of evening wanderers by their seeming ubiquity; and the Owls hold scientific converse with each other at half a mile distance.

Lastly, now we meet with one of the prettiest, yet most pathetic sights that the animal world presents; the early Lambs, dropped, in their tottering and bleating helplessness, upon the cold skirts of winter, and hiding their frail forms from the March winds, by crouching down on the sheltered side of their dams.

Now, quitting the country till next month, we find London all alive, Lent and Lady-day notwithstanding; for the latter is but a day, after all; and he must have a very countrified conscience who cannot satisfy it as to the former, by doing penance once or twice at an Oratorio, and hearing comic songs sung in a foreign tongue; or, if this does not do, he may fast if he pleases, every Friday, by eating salt fish in addition to the rest of his fare.

Now, the citizens have pretty well left off their annual visitings, and given the great ones leave to begin; so that there is no sleep to be had in the neighbourhood of May-fair, for love or money, after one in the morning.

Now, the dress boxes of the winter houses can

occasionally boast a baronet's lady; this, however, being the extent of their attainments in that way; for how can the great be expected to listen to Shakespear under the same roof with their shop-keepers? There is, in fact, no denying that the said great are marvellously at the mercy of the said little, in the matter of amusement; and there is no saying whether the latter will not, some day or other, make an inroad upon Almack's itself. Now, however, in spite of the said inroads, the best boxes at the Opera do begin to be worth exploring, since a beautiful Englishwoman of high fashion is "a sight to set before a king."

Now, the actors (all but the singing ones) in their secret hearts put up periodical prayers for the annual agitation of the Catholic Question; for without some stimulus of this kind, to correct the laxity of our religious morals, there is no knowing how soon they may cease to give thanks for three Sundays in the week during Lent.

Now, (during the said pious period) occasionally an inadvertent apprentice gets leave to go to "the play" on a Wednesday or Friday; and, having taken his seat in the one shilling gallery, wonders during six long hours what can have

come to the players, that they do nothing but sit in a row with their hands before them, in front of a pyramid of fiddlers, and break silence now and then by singing a psalm; for a psalm he is sure it must be, though he never heard it at church.

Now, every other day, the four sides of the newspapers offer to the wearied eye one unbroken ocean of *long-primer*; to the infinite abridgement of the labour of Chapter Coffee House quidnuncs, who find that they have only one sheet to get through instead of ten; and to the entire discomfiture of the conscientious reader, who makes it a point of duty to spell through all that he pays for, avowed advertisements included; for in these latter there is some variety—of which no one can accuse the parliamentary speeches. By the by, it would be but consistent in the Times to bestow their ingenuous prefix of [*advertisement*] on a few of the last named effusions. And if they were placed under the head of "Want Places," nobody but the advertiser would see cause to complain of the mistake.

Now, Fashion is on the point of awaking from her periodical sleep, attended by Mesdames Bean, Bell, and Pierrepoint on one side of her couch,

and Messieurs Myers, Stultz, and Davison on the other; each individual of each party watching with apparent anxiety to catch the first glance of her opening eye, in order to direct their several movements accordingly; but each having previously determined on those movements as definitively as if their legitimate monarch and directress had nothing to do with matter; for, to say truth, notwithstanding her boasted legitimacy, Fashion has but a very limited control, even in her own court; the real government being an Oligarchy, the members of which are each lords paramount in their own particular departments. Who, in fact, shall dispute an epaulet of Miss Pierrepoint's? and when Mr. Myers has achieved a collar, who shall call it in question?

Now, Hyde Park is worth walking in at four o'clock of a fine week day, though the trees are still bare; for there, as sure as the sunshine comes, shall be seen sauntering beneath it three distinct classes of fashionables; namely, first, the fair immaculates from the mansions about May Fair, who loll listlessly in their elegant equipages, and occasionally eye, with an air of infinite disdain, the second class, who are peregrinating on the other side the bar,—the fair frailties from the

neighbourhood of the New Road; which latter, more magnanimous than their betters, and less envious, are content, for their parts, to appropriate the greater portion of the attentions of the third class—the ineffables and exquisites from Long's, and Stevens's. Among these last-named class something particular indeed must have happened if you do not recognise that *arbiter elegantiarum* of actresses, the marquis of W——; that delighter in dennets and decaying beauties, the honourable L—— S——; and that prince-pretty-man of rake-hells and roués little George W——.

APRIL.

April is come! "proud—pied April!" and "hath put a spirit of youth in every thing." Shall our portrait of her, then, alone lack that spirit? Not if words can speak the feelings from which they spring. "Spring!" See how the name comes uncalled-for; as if to hint that it should have stood in the place of "April." But April *is* spring—the only spring month that we possess in this egregious climate of ours. Let us, then, make the most of it.

April is at once the most juvenile of the Months, and the most feminine—never knowing her own mind for a day together. Fickle as a fond maiden with her first lover;—coying it with the young Sun till he withdraws his beams from her, and then weeping till she gets them back again. High-fantastical as the seething wit of a poet, that sees a world of beauty growing be-

neath his hand, and fancies that he has created it, whereas it is *it* that has created him a poet; for it is Nature that makes April, not April Nature.

April is doubtless the sweetest month of all the year; partly because it ushers in the May, and partly for its own sake, so far as any thing can be valuable without reference to any thing else. It is, to May and June, what "sweet fifteen," in the age of woman, is to passion-stricken eighteen, and perfect two-and-twenty. It is, to the confirmed Summer, what the previous hope of joy is to the full fruition; what the boyish dream of love is to love itself. It is indeed the month of promises; and what are twenty performances compared with one promise? When a promise of delight is fulfilled, it is over and done with; but while it remains a promise, it remains a hope: and what is all good, but the hope of good? What is every *to-day* of our life, but the hope (or the fear) of to-morrow? April, then, is worth two Mays, because it tells tales of May in every sigh that it breathes, and every tear that it lets fall. It is the harbinger, the herald, the promise, the prophecy, the foretaste of all the beauties that are

to follow it—of all, and more—of all the delights of Summer, and all the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious" Autumn. It is fraught with beauties itself that no other month can bring before us, and

"It bears a glass which shews us many more."

As for April herself, her life is one sweet alternation of smiles and sighs and tears, and tears and sighs and smiles, till it is consummated at last in the open laughter of May. It is like—in short, it is like nothing in the world but "an April day." And her charms—but really I must cease to look upon the face of this fair month generally, lest, like a painter in the presence of his mistress, I grow too enamoured to give a correct resemblance. I must gaze upon her sweet beauties one by one, or I shall never be able to think and treat of her in any other light than that of *the Spring*; which is a mere abstraction,—delightful to think of, but, like all other abstractions, not to be depicted or described.

Before I proceed to do this, however, let me inform the reader that what I have hitherto said of April, and have yet to say, is intended to

apply, not to this or that April in particular—not to April eighteen hundred and twenty-four, or fourteen, or thirty-four—but to APRIL *par excellence;* that is to say, what April ("not to speak it profanely") *ought to be.* In short, I have no intention of being *personal* in my remarks; and if the April which I am describing should happen to differ, in any essential particulars, from the one in whose presence I am describing it, neither the month nor the reader must regard this as a covert libel or satire. The truth is that, for what reason I know not—whether to put to shame the predictions of the Quarterly Reviewers, or to punish us Islanders for our manifold follies and iniquities, or from any quarrel, as of old, between Oberon and Titania—but certain it is that

> "The seasons alter: hoary headed frosts
> Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
> And on old Hyems' thin and icy crown
> An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
> Is, as in mockery, set: the Spring, the Summer,
> The chilling Autumn, angry Winter, change
> Their wonted liveries; and the amazed world,
> By their increase, now knows not which is which."

It is of April, then, as she is when Nature is in her happiest mood, that I am now to speak;

and we will take her in the prime of her life, and our first place of rendezvous shall be the open fields.

What a sweet flush of new green has started up to the face of this meadow! And the new-born Daisies that stud it here and there, give it the look of an emerald sky powdered with snowy stars. In making our way to yonder hedgerow, which divides the meadow from the little copse that lines one side of it, let us not take the shortest way, but keep religiously to the little footpath; for the young grass is as yet too tender to bear being trod upon; and the young lambs themselves, while they go cropping its crisp points, let the sweet daisies alone, as if they loved to look upon a sight as pretty and as innocent as themselves.

I have been hitherto very chary of appealing to the poets in these pleasant papers; because they are people that, if you give them an inch, even in a span-long essay of this kind, always endeavour to lay hands on the whole of it. They are like the young cuckoos, that if once they get hatched within a nest, always contrive to oust the natural inhabitants. But when the Daisy, "la douce Marguerite," is in question, how can

I refrain from pronouncing a blessing on the bard who has, by his sweet praise of this "unassuming commonplace of nature," revived that general love for it, which, until lately, was confined to the hearts of "the old poets," and of those young poets of all times, the little children? But I need not do this, for he has his reward already, in the fulfilment of that prophecy with which he closes his address to his darling flower:

> "Thy long-lost praise thou shalt regain;
> Dear shalt thou be to future men,
> As in old time."

Does the reader, now that I have brought before him, in company with each other, "this child of the year," and the gentlest and most eloquent of all her lovers, desire to hear a few more of the compliments that he has paid to her, without the trouble of leaving the fields, and opening a book? I can afford but a few; for beneath yonder hedgerow, and within the twilight of the copse behind it, there are flocks of other sweet flowers, waiting for their praise.

> "When soothed awhile by milder airs,
> Thee Winter in the garland wears
> That thinly shades his few gray hairs;

Spring cannot shun thee;
And Autumn, melancholy wight,
Doth in thy crimson head delight
When rains are on thee."

[By the by, I cannot let pass this epithet, "melancholy," without protesting most strenuously against the above application of it. Seldom, indeed, is it that the poet before us falls into an error of this kind; and it is *therefore* that I point it out.]

"In shoals and bands, a morrice train,
Thou greet'st the traveller in the lane.
* * * *
And oft alone in nooks remote
We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
When such are wanted.

Be violets, in their secret mews,
The flowers the wanton Zephyrs choose;
Proud be the Rose, with rains and dews
Her head impearling;
* * * *
Thou art the poet's darling.

If to a rock from rains he fly,
Or some bright day of April sky
Imprisoned by hot sunshine lie
Near the green holly,
And wearily at length should fare,
He need but look about, and there
Thou art, a friend at hand, to scare
His melancholy!

If stately passions in me burn,
And one chance look to thee should turn,
I drink out of an humbler urn

A lowlier pleasure;
The homely sympathy, that heeds
The common life our nature breeds;
A wisdom fitted to the needs
Of hearts at leisure."

And then do but see what "fantastic tricks" the poet's imagination plays, when he comes to seek out *similies* for his fair favourite:

"A nun demure, of lowly port;
A sprightly maiden of love's court,
In thy simplicity the sport
Of all temptations;
A queen in crown of rubies drest;
A starveling in a scanty vest;
Are all, as seem to suit thee best,
Thy appellations.

A little Cyclops, with one eye
Staring, to threaten or defy—
That thought comes next—and instantly
The freak is over;
The shape will vanish—and behold!
A silver shield with boss of gold,
That spreads itself, some fairy bold
In fight to cover.

I see thee glittering from afar,—
And then thou art a pretty star;
Not quite so fair as many are
In heaven above thee!
Yet like a star, with glittering crest,
Self-poised in air thou seem'st to rest!
* * * *

Sweet flower! for by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past,
I call thee, and to that cleave fast;

Sweet silent creature!
That breath'st with me in sun and air,
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share
Of thy meek nature!"

What poetry is here! It "dallies with the innocence" of the poet and of the flower, till we know not which to love best. But we must turn at once from the fascination of both, and not allow them again to seduce us from our duty to the rest of those sweet "children of the year" that are courting our attention.

See, upon the sloping sides of this bank, beneath the hedgerow, what companies of Primroses are dedicating their pale beauties to the pleasant breeze that blows over them, and looking as faint withal as if they had senses that could "ache" at the rich sweetness of the hidden Violets that are growing here and there among them.

The intermediate spots of the bank are now nearly covered from sight by the various green weeds that sprout up every where—beginning to fill the interstices between the lower stems of the Hazel, the Hawthorn, the Sloe, the Eglantine, and the Woodbine, which unite their friendly arms together above, to form the natural in-

closure,—that prettiest feature in our English scenery, or at least that which communicates a picturesque beauty to all the rest.

Of the above-named shrubs, the Hazel, you see, is scarcely as yet in leaf; the scattered leaves of the Woodbine, of a dull purplish green, are fully spread; the Sloe is in blossom, offering a pretty but scentless imitation of the sweet hawthorn bloom that is to come next month. This latter is now vigorously putting forth its crisp and delicate filigree work of tender green, tipped with red; and the Eglantine, or wild rose, is opening its green hands, as if to welcome the sun.

Entering the little copse which this inclosure separates from the meadow, we shall find, on the ground, all the low and creeping plants pushing forth their various shaped leaves—stars, fans, blades, fingers, fringes, and a score of other fanciful forms; and some of them bearing the prettiest flowers in the world. Conspicuous among these, in addition to those of February and March, are the elegant little Wood-sorrel, with its delicately pencilled cups; the pretty Wild Strawberry; the common blue Hyacinth,—so delightful when it comes upon you in innu-

merable flocks while you are thinking of nothing less; the gently-stooping Harebell, the most fragile of all flowers, yet braving the angriest winds of heaven, by bowing to the ground before them; and, lastly, that strangest of flowers (if flower it be) called by the country folks Cuckoo-pint, and by the children Lords and Ladies.

Still passing on through this copse, we shall find all the young forest trees, except the oaks, in a kind of half-dress, like so many village maidens in their trim bodices, and with their hair in papers. Among these are conspicuous the graceful Birch, hanging its head like a half-shamefaced, half-affected damsel; the trim Beech, spruce as a village gallant dressed for the fair; the rough-rinded Elm, grave and sedate looking, even in its youth, and already bespeaking the future "green-robed senator of mighty woods." These, with the white-stemmed Ash, the Alder, the artificial-looking Hornbeam, and the as yet bare Oak, make up this silent but happy company, who are to stand here on the same spot all their lives, looking upward to the clouds and the stars, and downward to the star-like flowers, till we and our posterity (who pride ourselves on our superiority over them) are laid in that

earth of which *they* alone are the true inheriters.

But who ever heard of choosing a warm April morning to moralize in? Let us wait till winter for that; and in the mean time pass out of this pleasant little copse, and make our way windingly towards the village.

In the little green lane that leads to it we meet with nothing very different from what we have already noticed; unless it be an early Bee booming past us, or hovering for a moment over the snowy flower of the Lady-smock; or a village boy looking upward with hand-shaded brow after the mounting Lark, while he holds in his other hand the tether of a young heifer, that he has led forth to take her first taste of the fresh-sprouting herbage.

On reaching the Village Green, we cannot choose but pause before this stately Chestnut-tree, the smooth stem of which rises from the earth like a dark coloured marble column, seemingly placed there by art to support the pyramidal fabric of beauty that surmounts it. It has just put forth its first series of rich fan-like leaves, each family of which is crowned by its splendid spiral flower; the whole, at this period of the

year, forming the grandest vegetable object that our kingdom presents, and vying in rich beauty with any that Eastern woods can boast. And if we could reach one of those flowers, to pluck it, we should find that the most delicate fair ones of the Garden or the Greenhouse do not surpass it in elaborate pencilling and richly varied tints. It can be likened to nothing but its own portrait painted on velvet.

Farther on, across the Green, with this little raised footpath leading to it, stands a row of young Lindens, separating in the middle to admit a view of the Parsonage-house; for it can be no other. What a lovely green is theirs! and what an exact shape in their bright circular leaves, all alike, clustering and flapping over each other! And their smooth pillar-like stems shoot out from the hard gravel pathway like artificial shafts, without a ridge, a knot, or an inequality, till they spread forth suddenly just above the reach of branch-plucking schoolboys.

The Honeysuckles, that wreathe the trellised door of the neat dwelling, have already put forth their dull purple-tinged leaves, at distant intervals, on the slim shoots; but the Jasmin, that spreads itself over the circular-topped win-

dows, is not yet sufficiently clothed to hide the formality of its training.

To the right, the fine old avenue of Elms, forming the Walk leading to the low Church, are sprinkled all over with their spring attire; but not enough to form the shade that they will a month hence. At present the blue sky can every where be seen through them.

We might wander on through the Village and its environs for a while longer, pleasantly enough, without exhausting the objects of novelty and interest that present themselves in this sweetest of months; but we must get within more confined limits, or we shall not have space to glance at half those which more exclusively belong to this time.

If the Garden, like the Year, is not now absolutely at its best, it is perhaps better; inasmuch as a pleasant promise but half performed partakes of the best parts of both promise and performance. Now, all is neatness and finish, or ought to be; for the weeds have not yet began to make head; the annual flower seeds are all sown; the divisions and changes among the perennials, and the removings and plantings of the

shrubs, have all taken place. The Walks, too, have all been turned and freshened, and the Turf has began to receive its regular rollings, and mowings. Among the bulbous-rooted perennials, all that were not in flower during the last two months, are so now; in particular the majestic Crown-imperial; the Tulip, beautiful as the panther, and as proud,—standing aloof from its own leaves; the rich double Hyacinth, clustering like the locks of Adam; and Narcissus, pale and passion-stricken at the sense of its own sweetness,

But what we are chiefly to look for now are the fibrous-rooted and herbaceous Perennials. There is not one of these that has not awakened from its winter dreams, and put on at least the half of its beauty. A few of them venture to display all their attractions at this time, from a wise fear of that dangerous rivalry which they must be content to encounter if they were to wait for a month longer; for a pretty villager might as well hope to gain hearts at Almack's, as a demure daisy or a modest polyanthus think to secure its due share of attention in presence of the glaring peonies, flaunting roses, and towering lilies of May and midsummer.

Now, too, those late planted Stocks and Wall-flowers, that have had strength to brave the cutting blasts of winter, feel the benefit of their hardihood, and show it in the profusion of their blooms and the richness of their colours.

Finally, among flowers we have now the singular spotted Fritillary; Heart's-ease, the "little western flower," that cannot be looked at or thought of without feeling its name; and the Auricula, that richest in its texture and colour of all the vegetable tribe, and as various as rich.

Among the Shrubs that form the inclosing belt of the flower-garden, the Lilac is in full leaf, and loaded with its heavy bunches of bloom-buds; the common Laurel, if it has reached its flowering age, is hanging out its meek modest flowers, preparatory to putting forth its vigorous summer shoots; and the Larch has on it hairy tufts of pink, stuck here and there among its delicate threads of green.

But the great charm of this month, both in the open country and the garden, is undoubtedly the infinite *green* which pervades it every where, and which we had best gaze our fill at while we may, as it lasts but a little while,—changing in a few weeks into an endless variety of shades and

tints, that are equivalent to as many different colours. It is this, and the budding forth of every living member of the vegetable world, after its long winter death, that in fact constitutes THE SPRING; and the sight of which affects us in the manner it does, from various causes—chiefly moral and associated ones; but one of which is unquestionably physical: I mean the sight of so much tender green after the eye has been condemned to look for months and months on the mere negation of all colour, which prevails in winter in our climate. The eye feels cheered, cherished, and regaled by this colour, as the tongue does by a quick and pleasant taste, after having long palated nothing but tasteless and insipid things.

This is the principal charm of Spring, no doubt. But another, and one that is scarcely second to this, is, the bright flush of Blossoms that prevails over and almost hides every thing else in the Fruit-garden and Orchard. What exquisite differences and distinctions and resemblances there are between all the various blossoms of the fruit-trees; and no less in their general effect than in their separate details! The

Almond-blossom, which comes first of all, and while the tree is quite bare of leaves, is of a bright blush-rose colour; and when they are fully blown, the tree, if it has been kept to a compact head instead of being permitted to straggle, looks like one huge rose, magnified by some fairy magic, to deck the bosom of some fair giantess. The various kinds of Plum follow, the blossoms of which are snow-white, and as full and clustering as those of the almond. The Peach and Nectarine, which are now full blown, are unlike either of the above; and their sweet effect, as if growing out of the hard bare wall, or the rough wooden paling, is peculiarly pretty. They are of a deep blush colour, and of a delicate bell shape, the lips, however, divided, and turning backward, to expose the interior to the cherishing sun.

But perhaps the bloom that is richest and most *promising* in its general appearance is that of the Cherry, clasping its white honours all round the long straight branches, from heel to point, and not letting a leaf or a bit of stem be seen, except the three or four leaves that come as a green finish at the extremity of each branch.

The other blossoms, of the Pears, and (loveliest of all) the Apples, do not come in perfection till next month.

In thinking of the circumstances which happen this month in connexion with the animal world, I scarcely know where to begin my observations, so numerous are the subjects, and so limited the space they must be despatched in. The Birds must have precedence, for they are now, for once in their lives, as busy as the bees are always. They are getting their houses built, and seeing to their household affairs, and concluding their family arrangements, that when the summer and the sunshine are fairly come, they may have nothing to do but teach their children the last new modes of flying and singing, and be as happy as—birds, for the rest of the year. Now, therefore, as in the last month, they have but little time to sing to each other; and the Lark has the morning sky all to himself. Not but we have other April melodies, and one or two the *prémices* of which belong so peculiarly to this month, that we must listen to them for a moment, whatever else is awaiting us. And first let us hearken to the Cuckoo, shooting out its soft and mellow, yet powerful voice, till it seems to fill the whole

concave of the heavens with its two mysterious notes, the most primitive of musical melodies. Who can listen to those notes for the first time in Spring, and not feel his school days come back to him? And not as he did then

> "——— look a thousand ways
> In bush, and tree, and sky?"

But he will be likely to look in vain; for so shy are they, that lucky (or rather *un*lucky, to my thinking) is he who has ever *seen* a cuckoo. I well remember that from the first moment I saw one flutter heavily out of an old hawthorn-bush, and flurr awkwardly away across the meadow, as I was listening in rapt attention to its lonely voice, the mystery of the sound was gone, and with it no small share of its beauty.

If we happen to be wandering forth on a warm still evening during the last week in this month, and passing near a roadside orchard, or skirting a little copse in returning from our twilight ramble, or sitting listlessly on a lawn near some thick plantation, waiting for bedtime, we may chance to be startled from our meditations (of whatever kind they may be) by a sound, issuing from among the distant leaves, that scares away the silence in a moment, and seems to put to flight

even the darkness itself;—stirring the spirit, and quickening the blood, as no other mere sound can, unless it be that of a trumpet calling to battle. That is the Nightingale's voice. The cold spells of winter, that had kept him so long tongue-tied, and frozen the deep fountains of his heart, yield before the mild breath of Spring, and he is voluble once more. It is as if the flood of song had been swelling within his breast ever since it last ceased to flow; and was now gushing forth uncontrollably, and as if he had no will to control it: for when it does stop for a space, it is suddenly, as if for want of breath. In our climate the nightingale seldom sings above six weeks; beginning usually the last week in April. I mention this because many, who would be delighted to hear him, do not think of going to listen for his song till after it has ceased. I believe it is never to be heard after the young are hatched.

Now, too, the pretty, pert-looking Blackcap first appears, and pours forth his tender and touching love-song, scarcely inferior, in a certain plaintive inwardness, to the autumn song of the Robin. The mysterious little Grasshopper Lark also runs whispering within the hedgerows; the

Redstart pipes prettily upon the apple trees; the golden-crowned Wren chirps in the kitchen-garden, as she watches for the new sown seeds; and lastly, the Thrush, who has hitherto given out but a desultory note at intervals to let us know that he was not away, now haunts the same tree, and frequently the same branch of it, day after day, and sings an "English Melody" that even Mr. Moore himself could not write appropriate words to.

Though all the above-named are what are commonly called birds of passage, yet from their not congregating together, and from their particular habits (except of singing) being consequently but little observed, we are accustomed to blend them among the general class of English birds, and look upon them as if they belonged to us. But now also first come among us (whether from a far off land, or from their secret homes within our own, remains to this day undetermined) those mysterious and interesting strangers that enliven all the air of Spring and Summer with their foreign manners, and the infinite variety of whose movements it is almost as pleasant to watch as it is to listen to the modulations of their vocal brethren. I allude to the Swallow

tribe, who come usually in the following order, namely, first the Sand-Martin, the least noticeable of the tribe, and not affecting the dwellings of man; then the House or Chimney Swallow; then the House Martin; and lastly the Swift. Those who can see shoot past them, like a thought, the first swallow of the year, and yet continue pondering on their own affairs as if nothing had happened, may be assured that "the seasons and their change" were not made for them, and that, whatever they may fancy they feel to the contrary, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter are to them mere words, indicating the periods when rents are payable and interest becomes due.

As the Swallow tribe do nothing, for the first fortnight after their arrival, but disport themselves, we will leave them and the rest of the feathered tribe for the present. We shall have sufficient opportunities of observing all their pretty ways hereafter.

I am afraid we must now quit the country altogether, *as* the country; not however without mentioning that now begins that most execrable of all practices, Angling. Now Man, "lordly man," first begins to set his wit to a simple fish;

and having succeeded in attracting it to his lure, watches it for a space floundering about in its crystal waters, in the agonies of death; and when he is tired of this *sport*, drags it to the green bank, among the grass, and moss, and wild-flowers, and stains them all with its blood!* The "gentle" reader may be sure that I would willingly have refrained altogether from forcing upon his attention this hateful subject, especially amid such scenes and objects as we have just been contemplating: but I was afraid that my "silence" might have seemed to "give consent" to the practice.

We must now transport ourselves to the environs of London, and see what this happy season is producing there; for to leave the very heart of the country, and cast ourselves at once into the very heart of town, would be likely to put us in a temper ill suited to the time.

Now, on Palm Sunday, boys and girls (youths and maidens have got much above so "childish" a practice) may be met early in the morning, in blithe though breakfastless companies, sallying

* There is poetical authority for this expression, but I believe no other:

"And weltering dies the primrose with his blood."

GRAHAM.

forth towards the pretty outlets about Hampstead and Highgate on one side of the water, and Clapham and Camberwell on the other (all of which they innocently imagine to be "The Country"), there to sport away the pleasant hours till dinner-time, and then return home, with joy in their hearts, endless appetites in their stomachs, and bunches of the Sallow Willow with its silken bloom-buds in their hands, as trophies of their travels.

Now, at last, the Easter week is arrived, and the Poor have for once in the year the best of it,—setting all things, but their own sovereign will, at a wise defiance. The journeyman who works on Easter Monday should lose his *caste*, and be sent to the Coventry of Mechanics, wherever that may be. In fact, it cannot happen. On Easter Monday ranks change places; Jobson is as good as Sir John; the "rude mechanical" is "monarch of all he surveys" from the summit of Greenwich Hill, and when he thinks fit to say "It is our royal pleasure to be drunk!" who shall dispute the proposition? Not I, for one. When our English mechanics accuse their betters of oppressing them, the said betters should reverse the old appeal, and refer from Philip sober

to Philip drunk; and then nothing more could be said. But NOW, they *have* no betters, even in their own notion of the matter. And in the name of all that is transitory, envy them not their brief supremacy! It will be over before the end of the week, and they will be as eager to return to their labour as they now are to escape from it; for the only thing that an Englishman, whether high or low, cannot endure patiently for a week together, is, unmingled amusement. At this time, however, he is determined to try. Accordingly, on Easter Monday all the narrow lanes and blind alleys of our metropolis pour forth their dingy denizens into the suburban fields and villages, in search of the said amusement, which is plentifully provided for them by another class, even less enviable than the one on whose patronage they depend; for of all callings, the most melancholy is that of Purveyor of Pleasure to the poor.

During the Monday our determined holiday maker, as in duty bound, contrives, by the aid of a little or not a little artificial stimulus, to be happy in a tolerably exemplary manner. On the Tuesday, he *fancies* himself happy to-day, because he *felt* himself so yesterday. On the

Wednesday he cannot tell what has come to him, but every ten minutes he wishes himself at home, where he never goes but to sleep. On Thursday he finds out the secret, that he is heartily sick of doing nothing; but is ashamed to confess it; and then what is the use of going to work before his money is spent? On Friday he swears that he is a fool for throwing away the greatest part of his quarter's savings without having any thing to show for it, and gets gloriously drunk with the rest to prove his words; passing the pleasantest night of all the week in a watch-house. And on Saturday, after thanking "his Worship" for his good advice, of which he does not remember a word, he comes to the wise determination, that, after all, there is nothing like working all day long in silence, and at night spending his earnings and his breath in beer and politics!—So much for the Easter week of a London holiday maker.

But there is a sport belonging to Easter Monday which is not confined to the lower classes, and which fun forbid that I should pass over silently. If the reader has not, during his boyhood, performed the exploit of riding to the Turn-out of the Stag on Epping Forest—following the hounds

all day long at a respectful distance—returning home in the evening with the loss of nothing but his hat, his hunting whip, and his horse, not to mention a portion of his nether person—and finishing the day by joining the Lady Mayoress's Ball at the Mansion-House; if the reader has not done all this when a boy, I will not tantalize him by expiating on the superiority of those who have. And if he *has* done it, I need not tell him that he has no cause to envy his friend who escaped with a flesh wound from the fight of Waterloo; for there is not a pin to choose between them.

I have little to tell the reader in regard to London exclusively, this month; which is lucky, because I have left myself less than no space at all to tell it in. I must mention, however, that now is heard in her streets the prettiest of all the cries which are peculiar to them—"Come, buy my Primroses!" and but for which the Londoners would have no idea that Spring was at hand.

Now, too, spoiled children make "fools" of their mammas and papas; which is but fair, seeing that the said mammas and papas return

the compliment during all the rest of the year. Now, not even a sceptical apprentice (for such there be now-a-days, thanks to the enlightening effects of universal education) but is religiously persuaded of the merits of *Good* Friday, and the propriety of its being so called, since it procures him two Sundays in the week instead of one.

Finally,—now, Exhibitions of Paintings court the public gaze, and obtain it, in every quarter; on the principle, I suppose, that the eye has, at this season of the year, a natural hungering and thirsting after the colours of the Spring leaves and flowers, and rather than not meet with them at all, is content to find them on painted canvas!

MAY.

SPRING is with us once more, pacing the earth in all the primal pomp of her beauty, with flowers and soft airs and the song of birds every where about her, and the blue sky and the bright clouds above. But there is one thing wanting, to give that happy completeness to her advent, which belonged to it in the elder times; and without which it is like a beautiful melody without words, or a beautiful flower without scent, or a beautiful face without a soul. The voice of Man is no longer heard, hailing her approach as she hastens to bless him; and his choral symphonies no longer meet and bless *her* in return—bless her by letting her behold and hear the happiness that she comes to create. The soft songs of women are no longer blended with her breath as it whispers among the new leaves; their slender feet no longer trace *her* footsteps in the fields and woods and wayside copses, or dance delighted measures round the flowery of-

ferings that she prompted their lovers to place before them on the village green. Even the little children themselves, that have an instinct for the Spring, and feel it to the very tips of their fingers, are permitted to let May come upon them, without knowing from whence the impulse of happiness that they feel proceeds, or whither it tends. In short,

> " All the earth is gay;
> Land and sea
> Give themselves up to jollity,
> And with the heart of May
> Doth every beast keep holiday:"

while man, man alone, lets the season come without glorying in it; and when it goes he lets it go without regret; as if " all seasons and their change" were alike to him; or rather, as if he were the lord of all seasons, and they were to do homage and honour to him, instead of he to them! How is this? Is it that we have " sold our birthright for a mess of pottage?"—that we have bartered " our being's end and aim" for a purse of gold? Alas! thus it is:

> " The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
> Little we see in nature that is ours;
> We have given our hearts away—a sordid boon!"

And the consequence is, that, if we would know the true nature of those hearts, and the manner in which they are adapted to receive and act upon the impressions that come to them from external things, we must gain what we seek at secondhand; we must look into the records that have been copied from hearts that lived and beat ages ago; for in our own breasts we shall find only a blurred and scribbled sheet, or at best but a blank one. Even among our poets, the passions, characters, and events growing out of an over-civilized state of society, have usurped the place of those primary impulses and impressions in the susceptibility to receive which the poetical temperament mainly consists; and instead of Nature and her works being any longer the theme of our verse, these are only brought in as occasional aids and ornaments, to show off, not *man* as he essentially is in all time, but *men* as they accidentally are in the nineteenth century. It is true that one of our poets, and he the greatest, has nearly escaped the polluting influence of towns and cities. But in doing so, he has been compelled to take such close shelter within the citadel of his own heart, that his

mental health has somewhat suffered from a want of due airing and exercise. And this it is which will, in a great measure, prevent his works from calling us back to that vigorous and healthful condition which they otherwise might. No, even Mr. Wordsworth himself has not been able, from the loopholes of his retreat, to take that kind of glance at "man, nature, and society," which will enable him so to adapt himself to our wants as to do more than persuade us of their existence. To supply or set aside those wants will demand even a greater than he: unless indeed (as I fear) we are "hurt past all *poetry*," and must look for a cure to that Nature alone which we have so long despised and outraged. But be this as it may, we are still able to *feel* what Nature is, though we have in a great measure ceased to *know* it; though we have chosen to neglect her ordinances, and absent ourselves from her presence, we still retain some instinctive reminiscences of her beauty and her power; and every now and then the sordid walls of those mud hovels which we have built for ourselves, and choose to dwell in, fall down before the magic touch of our involuntary fancies, and give

us glimpses into "that imperial palace whence we came," and make us yearn to return thither, though it be but in thought.

"Then sing ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We *in thought* will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the MAY!"

Meet me, then, gentle reader, here on this Village Green, and forgetting that there are such places as cities in the world, let us "do observance to a morn of May:" we shall find it almost as pleasant an employment as money-getting itself! From this spot we can observe specimens of many of those objects which are now in their fullest beauty, and which we were obliged to pass over at our last meeting.

The stately Horse-chestnut is in still greater perfection than it was last month—each of its pyramidal flowers looking like a "picture in little" of the great American Aloe. The Limes, too, that shade the lower windows of the Parsonage, and the Honeysuckles that make a little bower of its trellised doorway, are now in full leaf.

By the sunshine, which falls in bright patches on this broad walk leading to the Church, we may observe that the Elms are not as yet in full leaf; and casting our eyes upward, we shall see, through the intervals between the thinly spread leaves, spots of blue sky looking down upon us like a host of blue eyes. In the little Churchyard the graves are all covered with a flush of new green, spotted here and there with Daisies, which make even them look gay; the Ivy, which binds together the stones of the old belfry, is every where putting forth its young shoots; and the dark Yew itself, that shades the low porch, feels the influence of the season, and is once more putting on a look of green old age.

Let us now pass over the little stile that divides this sadly sweet inclosure from the adjacent paddock, and make our way into the open fields beyond. But what is this rich perfume, that comes floating past us as we go, borne on the warm breeze like incense? What but the sweet breath of the Hawthorn, blended (for those who have organs delicate enough to distinguish it) with that of the Violet, which grows about its roots, and steams up its plaintive odours from a

crowd of hidden censers, till they reach the clouds of sweetness that are hanging above, and both are borne away together on the wings of every wind that passes. Those who are not accustomed to the *harmony of scents*, and cannot detect two or three together when they are blended in this manner, are exactly in the situation of those who are only susceptible of the *melodies* of music, and can hear nothing in *harmony* but *a single sound.*

One of the loveliest objects in the vegetable kingdom is a fine-grown Hawthorn tree, in the state in which we meet with it this month. But they are scarcely ever to be found in the open country, being of such extremely slow growth that they require particular advantages of soil, protection from the depredations of cattle, &c. before they can be made to reach the state of *a tree.* They are seldom to be met with in this state except in parks and pleasure-grounds; and even then they require to stand perfectly alone, or they do not gain that picturesque elegance of form on which so much of their beauty depends. There are some, I remember, both pink and white, in the deer-park of Maudlin

College, that are *a sight* to look upon. The extreme beauty of this tree when in blossom arises partly from the delightful mixture of the leaves and blossoms together,—almost all the other trees that can properly be called *flowering* ones putting forth their blossoms before they have acquired sufficient green leaves to contrast with and set them off. There is another tree that we have not yet noticed, the Sycamore, the effect of which, when it is suffered to grow singly, is extremely elegant at this season.

Now, too, and not till now, the Oak, the Walnut, and the Mulberry begin to put forth their leaves, offering us, even till the commencement of June, a seeming renewal or lengthening out of the Spring, when all the rest of the vegetable world has put on the hues of Summer. The two first of these, however, have during the first fortnight of their vegetation the brown and golden hues of Autumn upon them.

But we must be more brief in our search after the beauties of May, or we shall not have space to name the half of them. Let us turn, then, towards our home inclosures; glancing, as we pass, at a few more of those sweet sights which

belong to the fields exclusively. And first let us feed our eyes with the brilliant green of yonder Wheat-field. The stems, you see, have just attained height enough to wave gracefully in the wind; which, as it passes over them, seems to convert the whole into a beautiful lake of bright green undulating water. That Meadow which adjoins it, glittering all over with yellow King-cups, is no less bright and beautiful. It looks like the bed where Jupiter visited Danäe in a shower of gold. How pretty, too, are these Cowslips, starting up close beside our path, as if anxious to be seen, and yet hanging down their modest heads, as if afraid to meet the gaze that they seem to court.

We must delay for a moment beside this pretty Hedgerow, to observe a few more of the various coloured weeds (so called by those manufacturers of artificial flowers, the gardeners) which first put forth their blossoms this month. Conspicuous is the Campion, rising from the bank, with its single lake-coloured flowers scattered aloof from each other, upon their long bare stems. Among the lower leaves of these, rising from the ditch below, the Water-violet

rears its elegant head, consisting of rosy clusters ranged tier above tier, and lessening towards the top, till they form a flowery pyramid. About the edges of the banks, low on the ground, are scattered the Hyacinths in blue profusion, relieved here and there by the white Cuckoo-flower, or Lady-smock, the plain, but sweet-scented Woodruff, and the sunny Dandelion; while, close beneath the overhanging hedgerow, the Cuckoo-pint stands motionless in its green pavilion, and seems to keep watch, like a sentinel, over the flowery tribe around.

But see! yonder Butterfly, fluttering past us like a winged flower, reminds us that now come forth that ephemeral race whose lives are scarcely of longer date than those of the flowers on whose aroma they feed.

Now, shoot past us, like winged arrows, or hover near us like Fairies' messengers come to bring us tidings of the Summer, those frail creatures—green, and purple, and gold—borne on invisible gossamer wings,—of which the flying dragons of fairy and of pantomime-land are but clumsy imitations. Now, blithe companies of Gnats hum and hover up and down in the warm

air, like motes in a sunbeam. Now, the wayside Cricket begins to chirrup forth its monotonous mirth; for ever harping on one note, and never tiring or growing tired. Now, the great Humble Bee goes booming along, startling the pleased ear as he passes; or hurries suddenly out of the heart of some wayside flower, and leaves it trembling at his departure, as if a thought of his distant home had disturbed him in the midst of his blithe labours. Now, in the early dusk, the heavy Cockchafer hums drowsily along, or flurs from out some near lime-tree, and flings his mailed form (as if on purpose) into the face of the startled passenger. Now, at night, the Glow-worm shows her bright love-lamp to her distant mate, as he floats in the dim air above; and, seeing it, he closes his thin wings about him, and drops down to her side.

Now, the most active and industrious of all the smaller birds, the Swallow tribe, begin to devote themselves seriously to the business of the season. They have hitherto, since their first appearance, been sporting about in seeming idleness. But without this needful exercise and relaxation they would not be fit to go through the henceforth unceasing toils of the Summer;

for they have two or three broods to bring up before they retire, each of which, when hatched, requires the incessant toil of the parents from light till dark, to provide them food,—so dainty and delicate are they in the choice of it. Now, during this month, they begin and complete their dwellings; the House-swallow in the shafts of chimneys, thus providing their young at once with warmth and safety; the confiding Martin in the windows, and under the eaves, of our houses; and the Swift within the clefts of castles and other high old buildings, where "the air is delicate."

Finally, now many of the earlier builders are *sitting*, and some few have hatched their broods. Let those who would contemplate, in imagination, the most perfect state of tranquil happiness of which a sentient being is susceptible, gaze (still in imagination, for actual sight would break the spell for both parties) on the mother bird, breasting her warm eggs beneath the shade of some retired covert, while her vocal lover (made vocal by his love) sits on some near bough beside, and pours into her listening heart the joy that *will* not be contained within his own.

In the Garden we now find all the promises of April completed, and a host of others springing up, to be fulfilled in their turn during the rest of the season. But May, notwithstanding its reputation in this particular, is not to be considered as, *par excellence*, the Month of Flowers, at least in this climate, and in respect to those flowers which have now become exclusively garden ones: though of *wild* flowers, and of blossoms which are afterwards to produce fruit, it *is* the month. Of the annuals, for instance, which make so rich a show in common gardens, (and it is of those alone that these unexotic pages profess to speak), none flower in May; but all of them mix up their many-shaded greens, and contrast their various shaped forms, with those that do. Among these latter are, in addition to those of last month which still continue in blow, the rich-scented Wall-flower; the flower of as many names as colours, the prettiest of which is taken from that feeling which the sight of it gives—Heart's-ease; Crown-imperial; Lily of the Valley, most delicate of all the vegetable tribe, both in shape and odour,—its bright little illumination-lamps looking out meekly from their pavilions of emerald green; the towering blue

Monk's-hood; the pretty but foreign-looking Fritillary, or Snake's-head, as it is more appropriately called, from its shape and colours; and sometimes, when the season is unfavourably favourable, the Rose herself. But her and her attractions we must leave till they come upon us in showers, in her *own* month of June.

Among the flowering shrubs we have now, also, many which demand their Spring welcome. And first the Lilac; for it was scarcely in full bloom last month; and it is its rich fulness that constitutes much of its charm, though its scent is delightful. Now, too, the Guelder-rose flings up its spheres of white light into the air, supported on their invisible stems, and looking, as the wind blows them about, like the jugglers' balls chasing each other as if in sport. The Mountain-ash, too, puts forth its fans of white blossom, which the imagination converts, as soon as they appear, into those rich bunches of scarlet berries that make the winter months look gay; and which said "imagination" would do the same by the Elder-bloom, which also now appears, but that its delicious odour, when scented at a sufficient distance from its source, tells tales of any thing but winter and elder-wine. Lastly,

the Laburnum now hangs forth its golden glories, and shows itself, for a few brief days, the most graceful of all the inhabitants of the shrubbery. The blossoms of the Laburnum, where they are seen from a little distance, and have (from circumstances of soil, &c.) acquired their due dependent posture, can scarcely be looked at steadily without a seeming *motion* being communicated to them, as if some invisible hand had detached them from their stems, and they were in the act of falling to the earth in the form of a yellow rain.

In the orchard, the loveliest of all fruit-blossoms, the Apples, are now in full perfection. These flowers are scarcely ever examined or praised for their beauty; and yet they are formed of almost every other flower's best. They are as fresh as the Rose, and more delicate; as innocent as the Vale Lily, and more gay; as modest as the Daisy, and less prim. And surely they are not the worse for being followed by a beautiful fruit; any more than a beautiful bride is the worse for being a rich one. I have been "cudgelling my brains" (which, to speak the truth, I am seldom called upon to do) for a likeness to this lovely blossom; and I can

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find none but that which I have used already. The Apple-blossom is like nothing, in nature or in art, but the Countess of B——'s face; which is itself not wholly in either, being a happy mixture of the best parts of both—the sweet simplicity of the one, and the finished grace of the other; and which—but I beseech her to take it away from before my imagination at once, if she has any desire to see these pleasant papers come to a conclusion; for if it should again open upon me from among the flowers, like Cupid's from out the Rose, I cannot answer for the consequences on the remainder of this history; for, though I am able to find in the Apple-blossom no likeness to any thing but *her* face, if once I am put upon pointing out resemblances in *that*, it shall go hard but I will prove it to be, in some particular or other, the prototype of all beautiful things,—always excepting Sir Thomas's portrait of her; which, however *she* may be like *it*, is *not like her*. Her face is like—

'Tis like the morning when it breaks;
'Tis like the evening when it takes
Reluctant leave of the low sun;
'Tis like the moon, when day is done,
Rising above the level sea;
'Tis like ——

But hold!—if my readers, in consideration of the brief limits which confine me, are not to be treated with other people's poetry, they shall, at least, not be troubled with mine; to which end I must bid adieu to the abovenamed face, once and for ever.

We may now quit the garden for this month; though it would be ungrateful to do so without condescending to take one glance at that portion of it which is to supply our more substantial wants. Now, then, the Kitchen-garden is in its best trim, its orderly inhabitants having all put on their Spring liveries, and their sprightliest looks, but not being yet sufficiently advanced in growth to call down that havoc which will soon be at work among them. We must not venture into detail here; though the real lover of the Garden (unless he affects the *genteel*) would scarcely be angry with us if we did. But we may notice, in passing, the first fruits of the year—Gooseberries and Currants; the successive crops of Peas and Beans, "each under each," the earliest just getting into bloom; green lines of Lettuces, so spruce and orderly, that it seems a pity ever to break them; (ditto of Cabbages we of course utterly exclude, seeing that such

things were never heard of in the polite purlieus of Piccadilly;) Melon and Cucumber frames, glittering in the bright light, and half open, to admit the morning visits of the sun and air. In short, a flower-garden itself is but half complete, if we cannot step out of it at pleasure into the kitchen one, on the other side of the green screen or the fruit-clothed wall that bounds it.

Must we, after all this pleasant expatiation among the natural delights of May, repair to the metropolis, and see whether there is any thing worthy of remark among the artificial ones? I suppose we must; for it is mid-winter in London now, and the fashionable season is at its height. But we must not be expected to look about us there in the best possible humour, after having left the flowers and the sunshine behind us. We will, at all events, contrive to reach London on May-day, that we may not lose the only relic that is left us of the sports which were once as natural to this period as the opening of the leaves or the springing of the grass. I mean the gloomy merriment of Jack in the Green, and the sad hilarity of the chimney-sweepers. This is, indeed, a melancholy affair,

contrasted with what that must have been of which it reminds us. The effect of it, to the bystanders, is like that of a wobegone ballad-singer chanting a merry stave. It is good as far as it goes, nevertheless; inasmuch as it procures a holiday, such as it is, for those who would not otherwise know the meaning of the phrase. The wretched imps, whose mops and mowes produce the mock merriment in question, are the *parias* of their kind; outcasts from the society even of their equals, the very charity-boys give themselves airs of patronage in their presence; and the little beggar's brat, that leads his blind father along the streets, would scorn to be seen playing at chuck-farthing with them. But even they, on May-day, feel themselves somebody; for the rout of ragged urchins, that turned up their noses at them yesterday, will to-day dog their footsteps with admiring shouts, and, such is the love of momentary distinction, would not disdain to own an acquaintance with them. Nay, some of them are trying, even now, to recollect whether it was not with that young gentleman, in the gilt jacket and gauze trowsers, that they had the honour of playing at marbles

"on Wednesday last." There was not a man in the crowd, when Jack Thurtell was hanged, that would not have been proud of a nod from him on the scaffold.

Now, on the first day, the hats of the Hammersmith coachmen grow progressively heavy, and their heads light, with the "favours" they receive from the barmaids of the fifteen public-houses at which they regularly stop to refresh themselves between Kensington Gravel Pits and Saint Paul's.

Now, the winter being fairly set in, London is full of life; and Bond-street seems an enviable spot in the eyes of coach-makers, and cavalry officers on duty.

Now, the innocent inhabitants of May-fair wonder what the people in the street can mean by disturbing them at six in the morning, just as they are getting to sleep, by crying, "come buy my nice bow-pots!" not having any notion that there are natural flowers "in the midst of winter!"

Now, the Benefits have began at the winter theatres, and consequently all "genteel" persons have left off going there; seeing that the only

attraction offered on those occasions is a double portion of amusement: as if any body went to the theatre for *that!*

Now, the high fashionables, for once in the year, permit their horses' hoofs to honour the stones of the Strand by striking fire out of them; and, what is still more unaccountable, they permit plebeian shawls and shoulders to come in contact with theirs, on the stairs of Somerset House. And all to encourage the Arts! That their own portraits, by Sir Thomas, are among the number of the works exhibited, cannot for a moment be considered as the moving cause of such marvellous condescension.

Now, too, flowing through the Strand in opposite directions towards the same spot, may be seen, on fine days of the first fortnight, two streams of white muslin, on which flowers are floating, and which form a confluence at the gates of the Academy, and ascending the winding staircase together (which streams are seldom in the habit of doing), presently disperse themselves into a lake at the top of the building, which glows with as many colours as that on the top of Mount Cenis.

Now, too, still on the same spot, may be seen,

peering half shamefacedly in the purlieus of his own picture, some anxious young artist, watching intently for those scraps of criticism which the newspapers have as yet withheld from him (but which will doubtless appear in *tomorrow's* report); and believing, from the bottom of his soul, that the young lady, aged twelve years, who has just fetched her mamma to admire *his* production, is the best judge in the room; which, considering that he is a reasonable person, and nowise prejudiced, is more than he can account for in one so young!

Now, an occasional butterfly is seen fluttering away over the heads of the pale pedestrians of Ludgate Hill, who wonder what it can portend. Now, country cousins pay their triennial visits to the sights of London; and having been happy enough to secure lodgings in a side street in the Strand, have no doubt whatever that they are living at the west end of the town. Accordingly, they perambulate Parliament-street with exemplary perseverance, and then return to the country, to tell tales of the fashionables they have seen.

Finally, now the Parks really are the pleasantest imitations of the country that can be

met with away from it. That of Hyde is worth walking in at five on a fine week-day, if it be only to see how the footmen and the horses enjoy themselves; and still more so at four on a fine Sunday, to see how the citizens do the same. The Green Park, in virtue of the youths and maidens who meander about it in all directions on the latter day, looks, at a distance, like a meadow strewn all over with moving wild-flowers. And the great alley in Kensington Gardens, when the fashionables please to patronise it, is as pretty to look down upon, from the Pavilion at top, as one of Watteau's pictures.

JUNE.

Summer is come—come, but not to stay; at least, not at the commencement of this month. And how should it, unless we expect that the seasons will be kind enough to conform to the devices of man, and suffer themselves to be called by what name and at what period *he* pleases? He must die and leave them a legacy (instead of they him) before there will be any show of justice in this. Till then the beginning of June will continue to be the latter end of May, by rights; as it was according to the *old style*. And, among a thousand changes, in what one has the old style been improved upon by the new? Assuredly not in that of substituting the *utile* for the *dulce*, in any eyes but those of almanack makers. Let all lovers of Spring, therefore, be fully persuaded that, for the first fortnight in June, they are living in May; and then, all the sweet truths that I had to tell of the latter month, are equally applicable to half the present. We

shall thus be gaining instead of losing, after all, by the impertinence of any breath, but that of Heaven, attempting to force Spring into Summer, even in name alone.

Spring, therefore, may now be considered as employed in completing her toilet, and, for the first weeks of this month, putting on those last finishing touches which an accomplished beauty never trusts to any hand but her own. In the woods and groves also, she is still clothing some of her noblest and proudest attendants with their new annual attire. The oak until now has been nearly bare; and, of whatever age, has been looking old all the Winter and Spring, on account of its crumpled branches and wrinkled rind. Now, of whatever age, it looks young, in virtue of its new green, lighter than all the rest of the grove. Now, also, the stately Walnut (standing singly or in pairs in the fore-court of ancient manor-houses; or in the home corner of the pretty park-like paddock at the back of some modern Italian villa, whose white dome it saw rise beneath it the other day, and mistakes for a mushroom), puts forth its smooth leaves slowly, as "sage grave men" do their thoughts; and which over-caution reconciles one to the beating

it receives in the autumn, as the best means of at once compassing its present fruit, and making it bear more; as its said prototypes in animated nature are obliged to have their brains cudgelled, before any good can be got from them.

Among the ornamental trees, the only one that is not as yet clothed in all its beauty is, the most beautiful of all—the white Acacia. Its trim taper leaves are but just spreading themselves forth to welcome the coming summer sun; as those pretty female fingers which they resemble are spread involuntarily at the approach of the accepted lover.

The Mulberry, too, which in this country never sees itself unprovided with a smooth-shaven carpet of green turf beneath it, on which to drop (without injuring) its tender fruit, is only now rousing itself from its late repose. Its appearance is at present as poverty-stricken, in comparison with most of its well-dressed companions, as six weeks hence it will be rich, full, and umbrageous.

These are the chief appearances of the early part of this month which appertain exclusively to the Spring. Let us now (however reluctantly) take a final leave of that lovely and love-making

season, and at once step forward into the glowing presence of Summer—contenting ourselves, however, to touch the hem of her rich garments, and not attempting to look into her heart, till she lays that open to us herself next month: for whatever school-boys calendar-makers may say to the contrary, Midsummer never happens in England till July.

The most appropriate spots in which first to watch the footsteps of Summer are amid "the pomp of Groves, and garniture of Fields." There let us seek her, then.

To saunter, at mid June, beneath the shade of some old forest, situated in the neighbourhood of a great town, so that paths are worn through it, and you can make your way with ease in any direction, gives one the idea of being transferred, by some strange magic, from the surface of the earth to the bottom of the sea! (I say it gives *one* this idea; for I cannot answer for more, in matters of so arbitrary a nature as the association of ideas). Over head, and round about, you hear the sighing, the whispering, or the roaring (as the wind pleases) of a thousand billows; and looking upward, you see the light of heaven transmitted faintly, as if through a mass of green

waters. Hither and thither, as you move along, strange forms flit swiftly about you, which may, for any thing you can see or hear to the contrary, be exclusive natives of the new world in which your fancy chooses to find itself:- they may be *fishes*, if that pleases; for they are as mute as such, and glide through the liquid element as swiftly. Now and then, indeed, one of larger growth, and less lubricated movements, lumbers up from beside your path, and cluttering noisily away to a little distance, may chance to scare for a moment your sub-marine reverie. Your palate too may perhaps here step in, and try to persuade you that the cause of interruption was not a fish but a pheasant. But in fact, if your fancy is one of those which are disposed to "listen to reason," it will not be able to lead you into spots of the above kind without your gun in your hand,—one report of which will put all fancies to flight in a moment, as well as every thing else that has wings. To return, therefore, to our walk,—what do all these strange objects look like, that stand silently about us in the dim twilight, some spiring straight up, and tapering as they ascend, till they lose themselves in the

green waters above—some shattered and splintered, leaning against each other for support, or lying heavily on the floor on which we walk—some half buried in that floor, as if they had lain dead there for ages, and become incorporate with it; what do all these seem, but wrecks and fragments of some mighty vessel, that has sunk down here from above, and lain weltering and wasting away, till these are all that is left of it! Even the floor itself on which we stand, and the vegetation it puts forth, are unlike those of any other portion of the earth's surface, and may well recall, by their strange appearance in the half light, the fancies that have come upon us when we have read or dreamt of those gifted beings, who, like Ladurlad in Kehama, could walk on the floor of the sea, without waiting, as the visitors at Watering-places are obliged to do, for the tide to go out.

"But why," exclaims the reasonable reader, "detain us, at a time of year like this, among fancies and associations, when facts and realities a thousand times more lovely are waiting to be recorded?" He is right, and I bow to the reproof; only I must escape at once from the

old Forest into which I had inadvertently wandered; for *there* I shall not be able to remain a moment fancy-free.

Stepping forth, then, into the open fields, what a bright pageant of Summer beauty is spread out before us! We are standing, you perceive, on a little eminence, every point of which presents some particular offering of the season, and from which we can also look abroad upon those which require a more distant and general gaze. Everywhere about our feet flocks of Wild-Flowers

"Do paint the meadow with delight."

We must not stay to pluck and particularize them; for most of them have already had their greeting from us in the two preceding months; and though they insist on repeating themselves during this, they must not expect us to do the same, to the exclusion of others whose claims are newer and not less noticeable. That we may duly attend to these latter, let us pass along beside this flourishing Hedge-row, that skirts the Wood from which we have just emerged.

The first novelty of the Season that greets us here is perhaps the sweetest, the freshest, and

fairest of all, and the only one that could supply an adequate substitute for the Hawthorn bloom which it has superseded. Need the Eglantine be named? the "sweet-leaved Eglantine;" the "rain-scented Eglantine;" Eglantine—to which the Sun himself pays homage, by "counting his dewy rosary" on it every morning; Eglantine—which Chaucer, and even Shakespeare—— but hold—let me again insist on the Poets not being permitted to set their feet even within the porticos of these pleasant papers; for if once they do, good bye to the control of the rightful owner! I did but invite Mr. Wordsworth in, two months ago, as the reader may remember, just to say a few words in favour of the Daisy, in pure gratitude for his having made it a sort of sin to tread on one,—and lo! there was no getting him out again, till he had poured forth two or three pages full of stanzas, touching that one "wee, modest, crimson-tipped Flower!" Besides, what need have we for the aid of Poets (I mean *the* Poets, so called *par excellence*) when in the actual presence of that Nature which made *them* such, and can make *us* such too, if any thing can. In fact, whatsoever the Poets themselves may insinuate to the contrary, to read poetry in

the presence of Nature is a kind of impiety: it is like reading the commentators on Shakespeare, and skipping the text; for you cannot attend to both; to say nothing of Nature's book being a *vade mecum* that can make "every man his own poet" for the time being; and there is, after all, no poetry like that which we create for ourselves. Away, then, with the Poets by profession—at least till the winter comes, and we want them.

Begging pardon of the Eglantine for having permitted any thing—even her own likeness in the Poets' looking-glass—to turn our attention from her real self,—look with what infinite grace she scatters her sweet coronals here and there among her bending branches; or hangs them, half-concealed, among the heavy blossoms of the Woodbine that lifts itself so boldly above her, after having first clung to *her* for support; or permits them to peep out here and there close to the ground, and almost hidden by the rank weeds below; or holds out a whole arch-way of them, swaying backward and forward in the breeze, as if praying of the passers hand to pluck them. Let who will praise the Hawthorn—now it is no more! The Wild Rose is the Queen of

Forest Flowers, if it be only because she is as unlike a Queen as the absence of every thing courtly can make her.

The Woodbine deserves to be held next in favour during this month; though more on account of its *intellectual* than its personal beauty. All the air is faint with its rich sweetness; and the delicate breath of its lovely rival is lost in the luscious odours which it exhales.

These are the only *scented* Wild Flowers that we shall now meet with in any profusion; for though the Violet may still be found by looking for, its breath has lost much of its spring power. But if we are content with mere beauty, this month is perhaps more profuse of it than any other, even in that department of Nature which we are now examining—namely, the Fields and Woods. The rich hedge-row from which we have just been plucking the Eglantine and the Wild Honeysuckle is fringed all along its borders, and festooned in every part, with gay clusters, some of which appeared for the first time last month, and continue through this, and with numerous others which now first come forth. Most conspicuous among the latter are the brilliant Hound's tongue; the striped and

variegated Convolvulus; the Wild Scabious, pale and scentless sister of the rich garden one; the Ox-eye, or Great White Daisy, looking, with its yellow centre surrounded by white beams, like the miniature original of the Sun on country sign-posts; the Mallow, that supplies the little children with *cheeses*; and two or three of the almost animated Orchises, particularly the Bee-Orchis,—which escapes being rifled of its sweets by that general plunderer who gives his name to it, by always seeming to be pre-occupied.

Before quitting the little elevation on which we have commenced our observations, we must take a brief general glance at the various masses of objects that it brings within our view. The Woods and Groves, and the single Forest Trees that rise here and there from out the bounding Hedge-rows, are now in full foliage; all, however, presenting a somewhat sombre, because monotonous, hue, wanting all the tender newness of the Spring, and all the rich variety of the Autumn. And this is the more observable, because the numerous plots of cultivated land, divided from each other by the hedge-rows, and looking, at this distance, like beds in a garden divided by box, are nearly all still invested with

the same green mantle; for the Wheat, the Oats, the Barley, and even the early Rye, though now in full flower, have not yet become tinged with their harvest hues. They are all alike green; and the only change that can be seen in their appearance is that caused by the different lights into which each is thrown, as the wind passes over them. The patches of purple or of white Clover that intervene here and there, and are now in flower, offer striking exceptions to the above, and at the same time load the air with their sweetness. Nothing can be more rich and beautiful in its effect on a distant prospect at this season, than a great patch of purple Clover lying apparently motionless on a sunny upland, encompassed by a whole sea of green Corn, waving and shifting about it at every breath that blows.

Before quitting this Wood-side, let us observe that the hitherto full concert of the singing birds is now beginning to falter, and fall short. We shall do well to make the most of it now; for in two or three weeks it will almost entirely cease till the Autumn. I mean that it will cease as a full concert; for we shall have single songsters all through the Summer at intervals; and those

some of the sweetest and best. The best of all, indeed, the Nightingale, we have now lost. It is never to be heard for more than two months in this country, and never at all after the young are hatched, which happens about this time. So that the youths and maidens who now go in pairs to the Wood-side, on warm nights, to listen for its song (hoping they may *not* hear it), are well content to hear each other's voice instead.

We have still, however, some of the finest of the second class of songsters left; for the Nightingale, like Catalani, is a class by itself. The mere chorus-singers of the Grove are also beginning to be silent; so that the *jubilate* that has been chanting for the last month is now over. But the Stephenses, the Trees, the Patons, and the Poveys, are still with us, under the forms of the Woodlark, the Skylark, the Blackcap, and the Goldfinch. And the first-named of these, now that it no longer fears the rivalry of the unrivalled, not seldom, on warm nights, sings at intervals all night long, poised at one spot high up in the soft moonlit air.

We have still another pleasant little singer, the Field Cricket, whose clear shrill voice the warm weather has now matured to its full

strength, and who must not be forgotten, though he has but one song to offer us all his life long, and that one consisting but of one note; for it is a note of joy, and *will* not be heard without engendering its like. You may hear him in wayside banks, where the Sun falls hot, shrilling out his loud cry into the still air all day long, as he sits at the mouth of his cell; and if you chance to be passing by the same spot at midnight, you may hear it then too.

We must now make our way towards home, noticing a few of the remaining marks of mid-June as we pass along. Now, then, in covert Copses, or on the skirts of dark Woods, the Foxglove rears its one splendid spire of speckled flowers from the centre of its cone of dull, down-hanging leaves.—Now, scarlet Poppies peer up here and there in bright companies among the green shafts of the Corn, and scatter beauty over the mischief they do.—Now, Bees and little boys banquet on the honey-laden flowers of the white Hedge-nettle.—Now, the Brooms put forth their gold and silver blossoms on hitherto barren Heaths, and change them into beauteous gardens.—Now, whole fields of Peas send out their winged blossoms, which look like flocks of

purple and white butterflies basking in the sun. —Now, too, the Bean, which has little or no perceptible scent when gathered and smelt to singly, growing together in fields breathes forth the most enchanting odour,—only to be come at, however, by the wind, which bears and spreads it half over the adjacent plains.

Now, also, we meet with several new objects among the animated part of the creation, a few only of which we must stay to notice.—Now, the Grasshopper vaults merrily in the meadows, leaping over the tops of their mountains (the molehills), and fancying himself a bird.—Now, the great Dragon-flies shoot with their shining wings through the air, as if bearing some fairy to its distant bower; or hover, apparently motion and motiveless, as if they had forgotten their way, or were waiting to look at some invisible direction-post. We had best not inquire too curiously into their employment at those moments, lest we should find that they are only stopping to take a bait, consisting of some beautiful invisible that had just began to enjoy its age of half an hour.—Now, lastly, as the Sun declines, may be seen, emerging from the surface of shallow streams, and lying there for a while till

its wings are dried for flight, the (misnamed) *May*-fly. Escaping, after a protracted struggle of half a minute, from its watery birth-place, it flutters restlessly, up and down, up and down, over the same spot, during its whole era of a summer evening; and at last dies, as the last dying streaks of day are leaving the western horizon. And yet, who shall say that in that space of time it has not undergone all the vicissitudes of a long and eventful life? That it has not felt all the freshness of youth, all the vigour of maturity, all the weakness and satiety of old age, and all the pangs of death itself? In short, who shall satisfy us that any essential difference exists between *its* four hours and *our* fourscore years?

Before entering the home inclosure, we must pay due honour to the two grand husbandry occupations of this month; the Hay-harvest, and the Sheep-shearing.

The Hay-harvest, besides filling the whole air with its sweetness, is even more picturesque in the appearances it offers, as well as more pleasant in the associations it calls forth, than *the* Harvest in Autumn. What a delightful succession of pictures it presents! First, the Mowers, stoop-

ing over their scythes, and moving with measured paces through the early morning mists, interrupted at intervals by the freshening music of the whetstone.

Then—blithe companies of both sexes, ranged in regular array, and moving lengthwise and across the Meadow, each with the same action, and the ridges rising or disappearing behind them as they go:

"There are forty *moving* like one."—

Then again, when the fragrant crop is nearly fit to be gathered in, and lies piled up in dusky-coloured hillocks upon the yellow sward, while here and there, beneath the shade of a "hedge-row elm," or braving the open sunshine in the centre of the scene, sunburnt Groups are seated in circles at their noonday meal, enjoying that ease which nothing but labour can generate.

And lastly, when Man and Nature, mutually assisting each other, have completed the work of preparation, and the cart stands still to receive its last forkfull; while the horse, almost hidden beneath his apparently overwhelming load, lifts up his patient head sideways to pick a mouthful; and all about stand the labourers, leaning listlessly on their implements, and eyeing the completion of their work.

What sweet pastoral pictures are here! The last, in particular, is prettier to look upon than any thing else, not excepting one of Wouvermann's imitations of it.

Sheep-shearing, the other great rural labour of this delightful month, if not so full of variety as the Hay-harvest, and so creative of matter for those "in search of the picturesque" (though it is scarcely less so), is still more lively, animated, and spirit-stirring; and it besides retains something of the character of a Rural Holiday,—which rural matters need, in this age and in this country, more than ever they did since it became a civilized and happy one. The Sheep-shearings are the only *stated* periods of the year at which we hear of festivities, and gatherings together of the lovers and practisers of English husbandry; for even the Harvest-home itself is fast sinking into disuse, as a scene of mirth and revelry, from the want of being duly encouraged and partaken in by the great ones of the Earth; without whose countenance and example it is questionable whether eating, drinking, and sleeping, would not soon become vulgar practices, and be discontinued accordingly! In a state of things like this, the Holkham and Woburn Sheep-shearings do more honour to their promoters than all their

wealth can purchase and all their titles convey. But we are getting beyond our soundings: honours, titles, and "states of things," are what we do not pretend to meddle with, especially when the pretty sights and sounds preparatory to and attendant on Sheep-shearing, as a mere rural employment, are waiting to be noticed.

Now, then, on the first really summer's day, the whole Flock being collected on the higher bank of the pool formed at the abrupt winding of the nameless mill-stream, at the point perhaps where the little wooden bridge runs slantwise across it, and the attendants being stationed waist-deep in the midwater, the Sheep are, after a silent but obstinate struggle or two, plunged headlong, one by one, from the precipitous bank; when, after a moment of confused splashing, their heavy fleeces float them along, and their feet, moving by an instinctive art which every creature but man possesses, guide them towards the opposite shallows, that steam and glitter in the sunshine. Midway, however, they are fain to submit to the rude grasp of the relentless washer; which they undergo with as ill a grace as preparatory-schoolboys do the same operation.

Then, gaining the opposite shore heavily, they stand for a moment till the weight of water leaves them, and, shaking their streaming sides, go bleating away towards their fellows on the adjacent green, wondering within themselves what has happened.

The Shearing is no less lively and picturesque, and no less attended by all the idlers of the Village as spectators. The Shearers, seated in rows beside the crowded pens, with the seemingly inanimate load of fleece in their laps, and bending intently over their work; the occasional whetting and clapping of the shears; the neatly attired housewives, waiting to receive the fleeces; the smoke from the tar-kettle, ascending through the clear air; the shorn Sheep escaping, one by one, from their temporary bondage, and trotting away towards their distant brethren, bleating all the while for their Lambs, that do not know them;—all this, with its ground of universal green, and finished every where by its leafy distances, except where the village spire intervenes, forms together a living picture, pleasanter to look upon than words can speak, but still pleasanter to think of when *that* is the nearest approach you can make to it.

We must now betake ourselves to the Garden, which I have perhaps kept aloof from longer than I ought, from something like a fear that the flush of beauty we shall meet there will go near to infringe upon that perfect sobriety of style on which these papers so much pique themselves, and which, I hope, has not hitherto been departed from! What may happen now, however, is more than I shall venture to anticipate. If, therefore, in passing across yonder smooth elastic Turf, now in its fullest perfection, and making our way towards the Flower-plots that are imbedded in it, my imagination should imbibe some of the occasionally undue warmth of the season, and my fancy find itself "half in a blush of clustering roses lost," and these should together engender a style as flowery as the subject about which it is to concern itself, the reader will be good enough to bear in mind, that even the Berecinian blood of an Irish Barrister can scarcely be made to keep within due bounds, when he has a beauty for his client! nay, that even *the* Irish Barrister *par excellence* is sometimes misled into a metaphor, and inveigled into an allitteration, when his theme happens to be more than ordinarily inspiring!

As the Wild Rose is the reigning belle of the Forest during this Month, so *the* Rose occupies a similar rank in the more courtly realm of the Garden; and the latter is to her sweet relative of the Woods what the centre of the court circle in town (whoever she may be) is to the *Cynosure* of a country village. Here, in these oval clumps, which she has usurped entirely to herself, we find her greeting us under a host of different forms at the same time, all of which are her own, all unlike each other, and yet each and all more lovely than all the rest! I must be content merely to call by name upon a few of the principal of these "fair varieties," and allow their prototypes in the reader's imagination to answer for themselves; for the Poets, those purloiners of all public property that is worth possessing, have long precluded us plain prosers from being epithetical in regard to Roses, without incurring the imputation of borrowing that from *them*, which *they* first borrowed from their betters, the Roses themselves.

What, then, can be more enchanting to look upon than this newly-opened Rose of Provence, looking upward half shamefacedly from its fragile stem, as if just awakened from a happy

dream to a happier reality? It is the loveliest Rose we have, and the sweetest—*except* this by its side, the Rose-unique, which looks like the image of the other cut in marble—the statue of the Venus de' Medici beside the living beauty that stood as its model. *This*, surely, *is* the loveliest of all Roses—*except* the White Blush-Rose, that rises here in the centre of the group, and looks like the marble image of the two former, just as the enamoured gaze of its Pygmalion has warmed it into life. You see, its delicate lips are just becoming tinged with the hues of vitality; and it *breathes* already, as all the air about it bears witness. Undoubtedly *this* is the loveliest of Roses—*except* the Moss Rose that hangs flauntingly beside it, seemingly the most careless, but in reality the most coquettish of court beauties; apparently the sport of every coxcomb Zephyr that passes, but in truth indifferent to all but her own sweet self; and if more modest in her attire than all other of her fair sisterhood, only adopting this particular mode because it makes her look more pretty and piquant. Her "close-fit cap of green," the fashion of which she never changes, has ex-

actly that *becoming* effect on her face which a French *blonde* trimming has on the face of an English *londe* beauty. But I must refrain from further details, touching the attractions of the Rose family, or I shall inevitably lose my credit with all of them, by discovering some reason why each, as it comes before me, is without exception preferable to all the rest. And, in fact, without wishing to be personal in regard to any, I must insist that, philosophically speaking, that Rose which is nearest at hand *is*, without exception, the best of Roses, in relation to the person affected by it; and that even the gaudy Damask, and the intense velvet-leaved Tuscan (each of which, in its own particular ear be it said, is handsomer than any of the beforenamed), must yield in beauty to the pretty little innocent blossoms of the Sweet-briar Rose itself, when none but that is by.

I am afraid the other Garden Flowers, that first appear in June, must go without their fair proportion of praise, since they *will* risk a rivalry with the unrivalled. They must be content with a passing "now" of recognition. Now, then, the flaring Peony throws up its splendid globes

of crimson and blush-colour from out its rich domelike pavilion of dark leaves.—Now, the elegant yet exotic-looking family of the Amaranths begin to put on their fantastical attire of fans, feathers, and fringes. Those, however, which give name to the tribe, the truly *Amaranthine*, or Everlasting ones, are not yet come; nŏr that other, most elegant and pathetic of them all, which is known by the name of Love-lies-bleeding.

Now, the Ranunculus tribe begin to scatter about their many-coloured balls of brilliant light. The Persian ones, when planted in beds, with their infinite varieties of tint and penciling, and their hundred leaves, lapped over each other with such inimitable art, eclipse all the Tulips of the Spring, and would eclipse their Summer rivals the Carnations too, but that the latter are as sweet as they are beautiful.

Now, the delicate Balsams rejoice in the fresh air which is allowed to blow upon them, and which, like too tender maidens, they have been sighing for ever since they came into bloom, without knowing that one rude breath of it would have blown them into the grave.

Now, too, the Fuchsia, that most exquisitely formed of all our flowers, native or exotic, is no

longer confined, like an invalid, to a fixed temperature, but is permitted to mix with its more hardy brethren in the open air.

Now, also, the whole tribe of Geraniums get leave of absence from their winter barracks, and are allowed to keep guard on each side the hall-door, in their gay regimentals of scarlet, crimson, and the rest, ranged "each under each," according to their respective inches, and all together making up as pretty a show as a crack regiment at a review. What the passers in and out can mean by plucking part of a leaf as they go, rubbing it between their fingers, and then throwing it away, is more than they (the Geraniums) can divine.

The other flowers, that present themselves for the first time in this most fertile of all the months, must be dismissed with a very brief glance at the commonest of them: which epithet, by the way, is always a synonyme for the most beautiful, among flowers. Now, the favourite family of the Pinks shoot up their hundred-leaved heads from out their low ground-loving clump of frosty-looking leaves, and are in such haste to scatter abroad their load of sweetness, that they break down the polished sides of the pretty green vase

in which they are set, and hang about it like the tresses of a school-girl on the afternoon of dancing-day.

Now, Sweet-Williams lift up their bold but handsome faces, right against the meridian Sun, —disdaining to shrink or bend beneath his most ardent gaze: whence, no doubt, their claim to the name of William; for no lady-flower would think of doing so!

Now, the Columbine dances a *pas-seul* to the music of the breeze; "being her first appearance this season;" and she performs her part to admiration, notwithstanding her Harlequin husband, Fritillary, has not been heard of for this month past.

Now, the yellow Globe-flower flings up its balls of gold into the air; and the modest little Virginia Stock scatters its rubies, and sapphires, and pearls, profusely upon the ground; and Lupines spread their wings for flight, but cannot, for very fondness, escape from the handsome leaves over which they seem hovering; and Mignonette begins to make good its pretty name; and, finally, the princely Poppy, and the starry Marigold, and the innocent little wild Pansy, and the pretty Pimpernel, and the dear little blue Ger-

mander, *will* spring up, unasked, all over the Garden, and you cannot find in your heart to treat them as weeds.

In the Fruit Garden, all is still for the most part promise: not, however, the flowery and often fallacious promise of the Spring; but that solid and satisfying assurance which one feels in the word of a friend who never breaks it. So that, to the eye and palate of the imagination, this month and the next are richer than those which follow them; for now you can "*have* your fruit and *eat* it too;" which you cannot do then. In short, now the fruit blossoms are all gone, and the fruit is so fully *set* that nothing can hurt it; and what is better still, it is not yet stealable, either by boys, birds, or bees; so that you are as sure of it as one can be of any thing the enjoyment of which is not actually past. Enjoy it now, then, while you may; in order that, when in the Autumn it *disappears*, on the eve of the very day you had destined for the gathering of it (as every body's fruit does), *you* alone may feel that you can afford to lose it. Every heir who is worthy to enjoy the estate that is left to him in reversion, *does* enjoy it whether it ever comes to him or not.

On looking more closely at the Fruit, we shall find that the Strawberries, which lately (like bold and beautiful children) held out their blossoms into the open sunshine, that all the world might see them, now, that their fruit is about to reach maturity, hide it carefully beneath their low-lying leaves, as conscious virgins do their maturing beauties;—that the Gooseberries and Currants have attained their full growth, and the latter are turning ripe;—that the Wall-fruit is just getting large enough to be seen among the leaves without looking for;—that the Cherries are peeping out in white or "cherry-cheeked" clusters all along their straight branches;—and that the other standards, the Apples, Pears, and Plums, are more or less forward, according to their kinds.

For reasons before hinted at, and in deference to the delicacy of that class of readers for whom these papers are in part propounded, I must, however reluctantly, refrain from descending any lower in the scale of vegetable life. It would ill become me to speak in praise of Green Peas in presence of a Peeress—who could not possibly understand the allusion! Think of mentioning Summer Cabbages within hearing of a Countess,

or French Beans to a Baronet's Lady! I could not do it. I cannot even persuade myself to "mention *Herbs* to ears polite!" If it were not for this proper, and indeed necessary restriction, there would be no end to the pleasant sights I might show the ordinary reader during this month, in the Kitchen-garden. But it may not be. I know my duty, and in pursuance of it must now at once "stay my hand, and change my measure."

Behold us, then, in the heart of London. In the Country, when we left it, Midsummer was just at hand. Here mid-Winter has just passed away! and the Fashionable World finds itself in a condition of the most melancholy intermediateness. It is now much too late to stay in Town, and much too early to go into the Country. And what is worse, all fashionable amusements are at an end in London, and have not yet commenced elsewhere; on the express presumption that there is no one at hand to partake of them in either case. There are two places of public resort, however, which still boast the occasional countenance of people of fashion; probably on account of their corresponding with the inter-

mediate character of the month—not being situated either in London or the Country, but at equal distances from each. I mean Kensington Gardens and Vauxhall. Now, in fact, during the first fortnight, Kensington Gardens is a place not to be paralleled: for the unfashionable portion of my readers are to know, that this delightful spot, which has been utterly deserted during the last age (of seven years), and could not be named during all that period without incurring the odious imputation of having a taste for trees and turf, has now suddenly started into vogue once more, and you may walk there even during the "morning" part of a Sunday afternoon with perfect impunity, always provided you pay a due deference to the decreed hours, and never make your appearance there earlier than twenty minutes before five, or later than half-past six; which is allowing you exactly two hours after breakfast to dress for the Promenade, and an hour after you get home to do the same for dinner: little enough, it must be confessed; but quite as much as the unremitting labour of a life of idleness can afford! Between the abovenamed hours, on the three first Sundays of this month, and the two last of the pre-

ceding, you may (weather willing) gladden your gaze with such a galaxy of Beauty and Fashion (I beg to be pardoned for the repetition, for Fashion *is* Beauty) as no other period or place, Almack's itself not excepted, can boast: for there is no denying that the fair rulers over this last-named rendezvous of the regular troops of *bon ton* are somewhat too *recherchée* in their requirements. The truth is, that though the said Rulers will not for a moment hesitate to patronise the above proposition under its simple form, they entirely object to that subtle interpretation of it which their sons and nephews would introduce, and on which interpretation the sole essential difference between the two assemblies depends. In fact, at Almack's Fashion is Beauty; but at Kensington Gardens Beauty and Fashion are one. At any rate, those who have not been present at the latter place during the period above referred-to, have not seen the finest sight (with one exception) that England has to offer.

Vauxhall Gardens, which open the first week in this month, are somewhat different from the above, it must be confessed. But they are unique in their way nevertheless. Seen in the darkness

of noonday, as one passes by them on the top of the Portsmouth coach, they cut a sorry figure enough. But beneath the full meridian of midnight, what is like them, except some parts of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments? Now, after the first few nights, they begin to be in their glory, and are, on every successive Gala, illuminated with "ten thousand *additional* lamps," and include all the particular attractions of every preceding Gala since the beginning of time!

Now, on fine evenings, the sunshine finds (or rather loses) its way into the galleries of Summer Theatres at whole price, and wonders where it has got to. Now, Boarding-school boys, in the purlieus of Paddington and Mile End, employ the whole of the first week in writing home to their distant friends in London a letter of not less than eight lines, announcing that the "ensuing vacation will commence on the —— instant;" and occupy the remaining fortnight in trying to find out the unknown numerals with which the blank has been filled up.

Finally, now, during the first few days, you cannot walk the streets without waiting, at every crossing, for the passage of whole regiments of little boys in leather breeches, and little girls in

white aprons, going to church to practise their annual anthem singing, preparatory to that particular Thursday in this month, which is known all over the world of Charity Schools by the name of "walking-day;" when their little voices, ten thousand strong, are to utter forth sounds that shall dwell for ever in the hearts of their hearers. Those who have seen this sight, of all the Charity Children within the Bills of Mortality assembled beneath the dome of Saint Paul's, and heard the sounds of thanksgiving and adoration which they utter there, have seen and heard what is perhaps better calculated than any thing human ever was to convey to the imagination a faint notion of what we expect to witness hereafter, when the Hosts of Heaven shall utter, with *one voice*, hymns of adoration before the footstool of the Most High.

JULY.

At last Summer *is* come among us, and her whole world of wealth is spread out before us in prodigal array. The Woods and Groves have darkened and thickened into one impervious mass of sober uniform green, and having for a while ceased to exercise the more active functions of the Spring, are resting from their labours, in that state of "wise passiveness" which *we*, in virtue of our so infinitely greater wisdom, know so little how to enjoy. In Winter, the Trees may be supposed to sleep in a state of insensible inactivity, and in Spring to be labouring with the flood of new life that is pressing through their veins, and forcing them to perform the offices attached to their existence. But in Summer, having reached the middle term of their annual life, they pause in their appointed course, and then, if ever, *taste* the nourishment they take in, and "enjoy the air they breathe." And he who, sitting in Summer time beneath the shade

of a spreading Plane-tree, can see its brave branches fan the soft breeze as it passes, and hear its polished leaves whisper and twitter to each other, like birds at love-making; and yet can feel any thing like an assurance that it does *not* enjoy its existence, knows little of the tenure by which he holds his own, and still less of that by which he clings to the hope of a future. I do not ask him to make it an article of his *faith* that the flowers feel; but I do ask him, for his own sake, not to make it an article of his faith that they *do not.*

Like the Woods and Groves, the Hills and Plains have now put off the bright green livery of Spring; but, unlike them, they have changed it for one dyed in almost as many colours as a harlequin's coat. The Rye is yellow, and almost ripe for the sickle. The Wheat and Barley are of a dull green, from their swelling ears being alone visible, as they bow before every breeze that blows over them. The Oats are whitening apace, and quiver, each individual grain on its light stem, as they hang like rain-drops in the air. Looked on separately, and at a distance, these three now wear a somewhat dull and monotonous hue, when growing in great spaces;

but this makes them contrast the more effectually with the many-coloured patches that every where intermix with them, in an extensively open country; and it is in such a one that we should make our *general* observations, at this finest period of all our year.

What can be more beautiful to look on, from an eminence, than a great Plain, painted all over with the party-coloured honours of the early portion of this month, when the all-pervading verdure of the Spring has passed away, and before the scorching heats of Summer have had time to prevail over the various tints and hues that have taken its place? The principal share of the landscape will probably be occupied by the sober hues of the above-named Corns. But these will be intersected, in all directions, by patches of the brilliant emerald which now begins to spring afresh on the late-mown meadows; by the golden yellow of the Rye, in some cases cut, and standing in sheaves; by the rich dark green of the Turnip-fields; and still more brilliantly, by sweeps, here and there, of the bright yellow Charlock, the scarlet Corn-poppy, and the blue Succory, which, like perverse beauties, scatter the stray gifts of their charms in proportion as

the soil cannot afford to support the expenses attendant on them.

Still keeping in the open Fields, let us come into a little closer contact with some of the sights which they present this month. The high Down on which we took our stand, to look out upon the above prospect, has begun to feel the parching influence of the Sun, and is daily growing browner and browner beneath its rays; but, to make up for this, all the little Molehills that cover it are purple with the flowers of the wild Thyme, which exhales its rich aromatic odour as you press it with your feet; and among it the elegant blue Heath-bell is nodding its half-dependent head from its almost invisible stem,—its perpetual motion, at the slightest breath of air, giving it the look of a living thing hovering on invisible wings just above the ground. Every here and there, too, we meet with little patches of dark green Heaths, hung all over with their clusters of exquisitely wrought filigree flowers, endless in the variety of their forms, but all of the most curiously delicate fabric, and all, in their minute beauty, unparalleled by the proudest occupiers of the Parterre. This is the singular family of Plants that, when cultivated in

pots, and trained to form heads on separate stems, give one the idea of the Forest Trees of a Lilliputian people. Those who think there is nothing in Nature too insignificant for notice, will not ask us to quit our present spot of observation (a high turf-covered Down) without pointing out the innumerable little thread-like spikes that now rise from out the level turf, with scarcely perceptible seed-heads at top, and keep the otherwise dead flat perpetually alive, by bending and twinkling beneath the Sun and breeze.

Descending from our high observatory, let us take our way through one of the pretty green Lanes that skirt or intersect the Plain we have been looking down upon. Here we shall find the ground beneath our feet, the Hedges that inclose us on either side, and the dry Banks and damp Ditches beneath them, clothed in a beautiful variety of flowers that we have not yet had an opportunity of noticing. In the Hedge-rows (which are now grown into impervious walls of many-coloured and many-shaped leaves, from the fine filigree-work of the White-thorn, to the large, coarse, round leaves of the Hazel) we shall find the most remarkable of these, winding up

intricately among the crowded branches, and shooting out their flowers here and there, among other leaves than their own, or hanging themselves into festoons and fringes on the outside, by unseen tendrils. Most conspicuous among the first of these is the great Bind-weed, thrusting out its elegantly-formed snow-white flowers, but carefully concealing its leaves and stem in the thick of the shrubs which yield it support. Nearer to the ground, and more exposed, we shall meet with a handsome relative of the above, the common red and white wild Convolvolus; while all along the face of the Hedge, clinging to it lightly, the various coloured Vetches, and the Enchanter's Night-shade, hang their flowers into the open air; the first exquisitely fashioned, with wings like the Pea, only smaller; and the other elaborate in its construction, and even beautiful, with its rich purple petals turned back to expose a centre of deep yellow; but still, with all its beauty, not without a strange and sinister look, which at once points it out as a poison-flower. It is this which afterwards turns to those bunches of scarlet berries which hang so temptingly in Autumn, just within the reach of little children, and which it

requires all the eloquence of their grandmothers to prevent them from tasting. In the midst of these, and above them all, the Woodbine now hangs out its flowers more profusely than ever, and rivals in sweetness all the other field scents of this month.

On the bank from which the Hedge-row rises, and on *this* side of the now nearly dry water-channel beneath, fringing the border of the green path on which we are walking, a most rich variety of Field Flowers will also now be found. We dare not stay to notice the half of them, because their beauties, though even more exquisite than those hitherto described, are of that unobtrusive nature that you must stoop to pick them up, and must come to an actual commune with them, before they can be even seen distinctly; which is more than our desultory and fugitive gaze will permit,—the plan of our walk only allowing us to pay the passing homage of a word to those objects that *will* not be overlooked. Many of the exquisite little Flowers, now alluded to generally, look, as they lie among their low leaves, only like minute morsels of many-coloured glass scattered upon the green ground—scarlet, and sapphire, and rose, and purple, and white,

and azure, and golden. But pick them up, and bring them towards the eye, and you will find them pencilled with a thousand dainty devices, and elaborated into the most exquisite forms and fancies, fit to be strung into necklaces for fairy Titania, or set in broaches and bracelets for the neatest-handed of her nymphs.

The little flowers of which I now speak,—with their minute blossoms, scarcely bigger than pins' heads, scattered singly among their low-lying leaves,—are the Veronicas, particularly that called the Wild Germander, with its flowers coloured like no others, nor like any thing else, except the Turquoise; the Scarlet Pimpernel; the Red Eye-bright; and the Bastard Pimpernel, the smallest of flowers. All these, however, and their like, I must pass over (as the rest of the world does) without noticing them particularly; but not without commending them to the reader's best leisure, and begging him to give to each one of them more of it than I have any hope he will bestow on me, or than he would bestow half so well if he did.

But there are many others that come into bloom this month, some of which we cannot pass unnoticed if we would. We shall meet with most

of them in this green Lane, and beside the paths through the meadows and corn-fields as we proceed homeward. Conspicuous among them are the Centaury, with its elegant cluster of small, pink, star-like flowers; the Ladies' Bed-straw, with its rich yellow tufts; the Meadow-sweet—sweetest of all the sweeteners of the Meadows; the Wood Betony, lifting up its handsome head of rose-coloured blossoms; and, still in full perfection, and towering up from among the low groundlings that usually surround it, the stately Fox-glove.

Among the other plants that now become conspicuous, the Wild Teasal must not be forgotten, if it be only on account of the use that one of the Summer's prettiest denizens sometimes makes of it. The Wild Teasal (which now puts on as much the appearance of a flower as its rugged nature will let it) is that species of thistle which shoots up a strong serrated stem, straight as an arrow, and beset on all sides by hard sharp-pointed thorns, and bearing on its summit a hollow egg-shaped head, also covered at all points with the same armour of threatening thorns—as hard, as thickly set, and as sharp as a porcupine's quills. Often within this fortress, im-

pregnable to birds, bees, and even to mischievous boys themselves, that beautiful Moth which flutters about so gaily during the first weeks of Summer, on snow-white wings spotted all over with black and yellow, takes up its final abode, —retiring thither when weary of its desultory wanderings, and after having prepared for the perpetuation of its ephemeral race, sleeping itself to death, to the rocking lullaby of the breeze.

Now, too, if we pass near some gently lapsing water, we may chance to meet with the splendid flowers of the Great Water Lily, floating on the surface of the stream like some fairy vessel at anchor, and making visible, as it ripples by it, the elsewhere imperceptible current. Nothing can be more elegant than each of the three different states under which this flower now appears; —the first, while it lies unopened among its undulating leaves, like the Halcyon's egg within its floating nest; next, when its snowy petals are but half expanded, and you are almost tempted to wonder what beautiful bird it is that has just taken its flight from such a sweet birth-place; and lastly, when the whole flower floats confessed, and spreading wide upon the water its pointed petals, offers its whole heart to the en-

amoured sun. There is I know not what of *awful*, in the beauty of this flower. It is, to all other flowers, what Mrs. Siddons is to all other women.

In the same water, congregating together towards the edge, and bowing their black heads to the breeze, we shall now see those strange anomalies in vegetation, the flowers, or fruit, or whatever else they are to be called, of the Bull-rush, the delight of village boys, when, like their betters, they are disposed to "play at soldiers." And on the bank, the handsome Iris hangs out its pale flag, as if to beg a truce of the besieging sun.

Before entering the Garden, to luxuriate among the flocks of Flowers that are waiting for us there, let us notice a few of the miscellaneous objects that present themselves this month in the open country. Now, then, cattle wade into shallow pools of warm water, and stand half the day there stock still, in exact imitation of Cuyp's pictures.—Now, breechesless little boys become amphibious,—daring each other to dive off banks a foot high, to the bottom of water two feet deep.—Now, country gentlemen who wander through new-cut Rye-fields, or across sunny meadows, are first startled from their re-

veries by the rushing sound of many wings, and straightway lay gunpowder plots against the peace of partridges, and have visions redolent of double-barrelled guns.—Now, another class of children, of a smaller growth than the above, go through one of their preparatory lessons in the pleasant and profitable art of lying, by persuading Lady-birds to "fly away home" from the tops of their extended fingers, on the forged information that "their house is on fire, their children at home."

Now, those most active and industrious of the feathered tribes, the Swallows and House Martins, bring out their young broods into the cherishing sunshine, and having taught them to provide for themselves, they send them "about their business," of congregating on slate-roofed houses and churches, and round the tops of belfry towers; while they (the parents) proceed in their periodical duty of providing new flocks of the same kind of "fugitive pieces," as regularly as the editors of a Magazine.

Now may be observed that singular phenomenon which (like all other phenomena) puzzles all those observers who never take the trouble of observing. Whole meadows, lanes, and commons,

are covered, for days together, with myriads of young Frogs, no bigger than horse-beans,—though there is no water in the immediate neighbourhood, where they are likely to have been bred, and the ponds and places where they *are* likely to breed are entirely empty of them. "Where *can* they have come from in this case, but from the clouds?" say the before-named observers. Accordingly, from the clouds they *do* come, the opinion of all such searching inquirers; and I am by no means sure they will be at all obliged to me for telling them, that the water in which these animals are born is not their natural element, and that, on quitting their Tad-pole state, they choose the first warm shower to *migrate* from their birth-place, in search of that food and home which cannot be found *there*. The circumstance of their almost always appearing for the first time after a warm shower, no doubt encourages the searchers after mystery in assigning them a miraculous origin.

Now, the Bees (those patterns of all that is praiseworthy in domestic and political economy) give practical lessons on the Principles of Population, by expelling from the hive, *vi et armis*, all those heretofore members of it who refuse to

aid the commonweal by working for their daily honey. When they need those services which none but the Drones can perform, they let them live in idleness and feed luxuriously. But as the good deeds of the latter are of that class which "in doing pay themselves," those who benefit by them think that they owe the doers no thanks, and therefore, when they no longer need them, send them adrift, or if they will not go, sacrifice them without mercy or remorse. And this—be it known to all whom it may concern (and those are not a few)—this is the very essence of Natural Justice.

Now, as they are wandering across the meadows thinking of nothing less, gleams of white among the green grass greet the eyes of bird-nesting boys, who all at once dart upon the welcome prize, and draw out from its hiding-place piece-meal what was once a Mushroom; and forthwith mushrooming becomes the order of the day.—Now, the lowermost branches of the Lime-tree are "musical with Bees," who eagerly beset its almost unseen blossoms—richer in sweets than the sweetest inhabitants of the garden.

Finally, now we occasionally have one of those

sultry days which make the house too hot to hold us, and force us to seek shelter in the open air, which is hotter;—when the interior of the Blacksmith's shop looks awful, and we expect the foaming porter pot to hiss, as the brawny forger dips his fiery nose into it;—when the Birds sit open-mouthed upon the bushes; and the Fishes fry in the shallow ponds; and the Sheep and Cattle congregate together in the shade, and forget to eat;—when pedestrians along dusty roads quarrel with their coats and waistcoats, and cut sticks to carry them across their shoulders; and cottagers' wives go about their work gown-less; and their daughters are anxious to do the same, but that they have the fear of the Vicar before their eyes;—when every thing seen beyond a piece of parched soil quivers through the heated air; and when, finally, a snow-white Swan, floating above its own image, upon a piece of clear cool water into which a Weeping-Willow is dipping its green fingers, is a sight not to be turned from suddenly.

But we must no longer delay to glance at the Garden, which is now fuller of beauty than ever: for nearly all the flowers of last month still continue in perfection, and for one that has dis-

appeared, half a dozen have started forward to supply its place.

Against the house, or overhanging the shaded arbour, among Shrubs, we have the Jasmin, shooting out its stars of white light from among its throng of slender leaves; and the white Clematis (well worthy of both its other names, of Virgin's Bower, and Traveller's Joy) flinging its wreaths of scented snow athwart the portico, and rivaling the Hawthorn in sweetness; and the Syringa, sweeter still. Now, too, the large Lilies lift up their lofty heads proudly, and do not seem to forget that they once held the rank of Queens of the Garden;—the rich-scented white one looking, in comparison with the red, what a handsome Countess does to a handsome Cook-maid.

Among the less aspiring we have now several whose beauty almost makes us forget their want of sweetness. Conspicuous among these are the Convolvulus, whose elegant trumpet-shaped cups open their blue eyes to greet the sun, and, at his going down, close them never to open again; and the Nasturtium, as gaudy in its scarlet and gold as an Officer of the Guards on a levee day; and the fine-cut Indian Pink; and the

profuse Larkspur, all flower, shooting up its many-coloured cones here and there at random, or ranging them in rich companies, that rival the Tulip-beds of the Spring.

In the Orchard and Fruit-Garden the hopes of the last month begin in part to be realized, and in all to be confirmed. The elegant Currant, red and white (the Grape of our northern latitudes), now hangs its transparent bunches close about the parent stem, and looks through its green embowering leaves most invitingly. But there you had best let it hang as yet, till the Autumn has sweetened its wine with sunbeams: for Autumn is your only honest wine-maker in this country; all others sweeten with sugar-of-lead instead of sunshine.—The Gooseberry, too, has gained its full growth, but had better be left where it is for awhile, to mature its pleasant condiment. As for the Tarts into which it is the custom to translate it during this and the last month,—they are "pleasant but wrong."—Now, too, is in full perfection the most grateful fruit that grows, and the most wholesome—the Strawberry. I grieve to be obliged to make "odious comparisons" of this kind, between things that are all alike healthful, where

the partakers of them are living under natural and healthful circumstances. But if Man *will* live upon what was not intended for him, he must be content to see what *was* intended for him lose its intended effect. The Strawberry is the only fruit in which we may indulge to excess with impunity: accordingly I hereby give all my readers (the young ones in particular) Mr. Abernethy's full permission to commit a debauch of Strawberries once every week during this month, always provided they can do it at the bed itself; for otherwise they are taking an unfair advantage of nature, and must expect that she will make reprisals on them.—Now, too, the Raspberry is delicious, if gathered and eaten at its place of growth. There it is fragrant and full of flavour, elsewhere flat and insipid.

The other fruits of this month are Apricot, one or two of the early Apples, and if the season is forward a few Cherries. But of these, the two latter belong by rights to the next month; so till then we leave them. And as for Apricots, they look handsome enough at a distance, against the wall; but they offer so barefaced an imitation of the outward appearance of Peaches and Nectarines, without possessing any one of their intrinsic

merits, that I have a particular contempt for them, and beg the reader to dismiss them from his good graces accordingly.

Of London in July—"*London* in *July*?"—surely there can be no such place! It sounds like a kind of contradiction in terms. But, alas! there *is* such a place, as yonder thick cloud of dust, and the blare of the horn that issues from it, too surely indicate. And what is worse, we must, in pursuance of our self-imposed duty, proceed thither without delay. We cannot, therefore, do better (or worse) than mount the coming vehicle (the motto of which at this time of the year ought to be "per me si va nella citta, dolente,") and,

Half in a cloud of stifling road-dust lost,

get there as soon as we can, that we may the sooner get away again.

Of London in July, there is happily little to be said; but let that little be said good humouredly; for London *is* London, after all—ay, even after having ridden fifty miles on the burning roof of the Gloucester Heavy, to get at it. Now, then, London is entirely empty; so

much so that a person well practised in the art of walking its streets might wager that he would make his way from St. Paul's to Charing Cross (a distance of more than a mile) within forty minutes!

Now, the *Winter* Theatres having just closed, the Summer ones "make hay *while the sun shines.*" At that in the Hay-market Mr. Liston acts the part of Atlas,—supporting every thing (the heat included) with inimitable coolness; while, in virtue of his attractions, the Managers can afford annually to put in execution their benevolent and patriotic plan, of permitting the principal *Barn-staple* actors to practise upon the patience of a London Pit with impunity.

At the English Opera-house the Managers, (Mr. Peake),—for fear the public, amid the refreshing coolness of the Upper Boxes, should forget that it is Summer time,—transfer the country into the confines of their Saloon (having purchased it at and for half-price in Covent Garden Market); and there, from six till eight, flowers of all hues look at each other by lamp-light despondingly, and after that hour turn their attention to the new accession of flowers, the Painted Ladies, which do not till then begin

blowing in this singular soil. In the mean time, on the stage, Mr. Wrench (that easiest of actors with the hardest of names) carries all before him, not excepting his arms and hands. I never see Wrench, [who, by the bye, or by any other means that he can, ought by all means to get rid of the roughening letter in his name, and call himself Wench, Tench, Clench, Bench, or any other that may please him and us better. Indeed I cannot in conscience urge him to adopt either of the above, if he can possibly find another guiltless of that greatest of all enormities in a name, the susceptibility of being punned upon; for it is obvious that if he *should* adopt either of the above, he must not, on his first after appearance in the Green Room, hope to escape from his punegyrical friend Mr. Peake, without being told, in the first case, (Wench) that his place is not *there* but in the *other* Green Room (the Saloon);—in the second, (Tench) that he need not have changed his name, for that he was a sufficiently *odd fish* before;—in the third, (Clench) that he (Mr. P.) is greatly in want of a clever one for the finale of his next farce, and begs to make use of *him* on the occasion;— and in the fourth, (Bench) that, belonging to a Royal Com-

pany, he is neither more nor less than the *King's Bench*, and "as such" must not be surprised if his theatrical friends fly to *him* for shelter and protection in their hour of need, in preference to his name-sake over the water.—I beg the reader to remember, that the punishment due to all these prospective puns belongs exclusively to Mr. Peake; and on him let them be visited accordingly. Though I doubt not he will intimate in extenuation, that they are quite *pun-ish-meant* enough in themselves.—But where was I?—oh] —I never see Wrench without fearing that, some day or other, a gleam of common sense may by accident miss its way to the brain of our winter managers, and they may bethink them (for if one does, both will) of offering an engagement to this most engaging of actors. But if they should, let me beseech him to turn (if he has one) a deaf ear to their entreaties; for we had need have something to look for at a Summer Theatre that cannot be had elsewhere.

I am not qualified to descend any lower than the Major of the Minor Theatres, in regard to what is doing there at this season; though it appears that Mr. Ducrow is still satisfying those who were not satisfied of it before, that Horse-

manship is one of the Fine Arts; and though the Bills of the Coburg append sixteen instead of six notes of admiration to Mr. Nobody's name. Being somewhat fastidious in the affair of phraseology, the only mode in which I can explain my remissness in regard to the above particular is, that, whereas at this season of the year *Steam conveys us* to all other places,—from the theatres frequented by throngs of "rude mechanicals" it most effectually keeps us away.

Now, on warm evenings after business hours, citizens of all ages grow romantic; the single, wearing away their souls in sighing to the breezes of Brixton Hill, and their soles in getting there; and the married, sipping syllabub in the arbours of White Conduit House, or cooling themselves with hot rolls and butter at the New River Head.

Now, too, moved by the same spirit of Romance, young patricians, who have not yet been persuaded to banish themselves to the beauty of their paternal groves, fling themselves into funnies, and fatigue their *ennui* to death, by rowing up the river to Mrs. Grange's garden, to eat a handful of strawberries in a cup-full of cream.

Now, adventurous cockneys swim from the Sestos of the Strand stairs to the Abydos of the coal-barge on the opposite shore, and believe that they have been rivaling Lord Byron and Leander—not without wondering, when they find themselves in safety, why the Lady for whom the latter performed a similar feat is called the Hero of the story, instead of the Heroine.

Finally,—now pains-and-pleasure taking citizens hire cozey cottages for six weeks certain in the Curtain Road, and ask their friends to come and see them "in the country."

AUGUST.

THE Year has now reached the parallel to that brief, but perhaps best period of human life, when the promises of youth are either fulfilled or forgotten, and the fears and forethoughts connected with decline have not yet grown strong enough to make themselves felt; and consequently when we have nothing to do but look around us, and be happy. It has, indeed, like a man at forty, turned the corner of its existence; but, like him, it may still fancy itself young, because it does not begin to feel itself getting old. And perhaps there is no period like this, for encouraging and bringing to perfection that habit of tranquil enjoyment, in which all true happiness must mainly consist: with *pleasure* it has, indeed, little to do; but with *happiness* it is every thing.

August is that debateable ground of the year, which is situated exactly upon the confines of Summer and Autumn; and it is difficult to say

which has the better claim to it. It is dressed in half the flowers of the one, and half the fruits of the other; and it has a sky and a temperature all its own, and which vie in beauty with those of the Spring. May itself can offer nothing so sweet to the senses, so enchanting to the imagination, and so soothing to the heart, as that genial influence which arises from the sights, the sounds, and the associations connected with an August evening in the Country, when the occupations and pleasures of the day are done, and when all, even the busiest, are fain to give way to that "wise passiveness," one hour of which is rife with more real enjoyment than a whole season of revelry. Those who will be wise (or foolish) enough to make comparisons between the various kinds of pleasure of which the mind of man is capable, will find that there is none (or but one) equal to that felt by a true lover of Nature, when he looks forth upon her open face silently, at a season like the present, and drinks in that still beauty which seems to emanate from every thing he sees, till his whole senses are steeped in a sweet forgetfulness, and he becomes unconscious of all but that *instinct of good* which is ever present with us, but which can so seldom make

itself felt amid that throng of thoughts which are ever busying and besieging us, in our intercourse with the living world. The only other feeling which equals this, in its intense quietude, and its satisfying fulness, is one which is almost identical with it,—where the accepted lover is gazing unobserved, and almost unconsciously, on the face of his mistress, and tracing there sweet evidences of that mysterious union which already exists between them. The great charm of Claude's pictures consists in their power of generating, to a certain degree, the description of feeling above alluded to; a feeling which no other pictures produce in the slightest degree; and which even his produce only enough of to either remind us of what we have experienced before, or give us a foretaste of what Nature herself has in store for us. And I only mention them here, in order that those who are accustomed to expend themselves in admiration of the copies may be led to look at the originals in the same spirit; when they will find, that the one is to the other, what a thought is to a feeling, or what a beautiful mask is to the beautiful living face from which it was modelled. Let the professed enthusiasts to Claude look at Nature's

pictures through the same eyes, and with the same prepared feelings, as they look at his (which few, if any of them have ever done), and they will find that they have hitherto been content to *fancy* what they now *feel*; and this discovery will not derogate from the value of the said fancy, but will, on the contrary, make it more effective by making it less vague. When you hear people extravagant in their general praise of Claude's Landscapes, you may shrewdly suspect that they have never experienced in the presence of Nature herself those sensations which enabled Claude to be what he was; and that, in admiring him, they have only been yielding to involuntary yearnings after that Nature which they have hitherto neglected to look upon. They have been worshipping the image, and passing by the visible god.

The whole face of Nature has undergone, since last month, an obvious change; obvious to those who delight to observe all her changes and operations, but not sufficiently striking to insist on being seen generally by those who can read no characters but such as are written in a *text* hand. If the general *colours* of all the various departments of natural scenery are not changed,

their *hues* are; and if there is not yet observable the infinite variety of Autumn, there is as little the extreme monotony of Summer. In one department, however, there *is* a general change, that cannot well remain unobserved. The rich and unvarying green of the Corn-fields has entirely and almost suddenly changed, to a still richer and more conspicuous gold colour; more conspicuous on account of the contrast it now offers to the lines, patches, and masses of green with which it every where lies in contact, in the form of intersecting Hedge-rows, intervening Meadows, and bounding masses of Forest. These latter are changed too; but in *hue* alone, not in colour. They are all of them still green; but it is not the fresh and tender green of the Spring, nor the full and satisfying, though somewhat dull, green of the Summer; but many greens, that blend all those belonging to the seasons just named, with others at once more grave and more bright; and the charming variety and interchange of which are peculiar to this delightful month, and are more beautiful in their general effect than those of either of the preceding periods: just as a truly beautiful woman is perhaps more beautiful at the period immediately

before that at which her charms begin to wane, than she ever was before. Here, however, the comparison must end; for with the year its incipient decay is the signal for it to put on more and more beauties daily, till, when it reaches the period at which it is on the point of sinking into the temporary death of Winter, it is more beautiful in general appearance than ever.

But we must not anticipate. We may linger upon one spot, or step aside from our path, or return upon our steps; but we must not anticipate; for those who would duly enjoy and appreciate the Present and the Past, must wait for the Future till it comes to them. The Future and the Present are jealous of each other; and those who attempt to enjoy both at the same time, will not be graciously received by either.

The general appearance of natural scenery is now much more varied in its character than it has hitherto been. The Corn-fields are all redundant with waving gold—gold of all hues—from the light yellow of the Oats (those which still remain uncut), to the deep sunburnt glow of the red Wheat. But the wide rich sweeps of these fields are now broken in upon, here and there, by patches of the parched and withered

looking Bean crops; by occasional bits of newly ploughed land, where the Rye lately stood; by the now darkening Turnips—dark, except where they are being fed off by Sheep Flocks; and lastly by the still bright-green Meadows, now studded every where with grazing cattle, the second crops of Grass being already gathered in.

The Woods, as well as the single Timber Trees that occasionally start up with such fine effect from out the Hedge-rows, or in the midst of Meadows and Corn-fields, we shall now find sprinkled with what at first looks like gleams of scattered sunshine lying among the leaves, but what, on examination, we shall find to be the new foliage that has been put forth since Mid-summer, and which yet retains all the brilliant green of the Spring. The effect of this new green, lying in sweeps and patches upon the old, though little observed in general, is one of the most beautiful and characteristic appearances of this season. In many cases, when the sight of it is caught near at hand, on the sides of thick Plantations, the effect of it is perfectly deceptive, and you wonder for a moment how it is, that while the sun is shining so brightly *every where*,

it should shine so much *more* brightly on those particular spots.

We shall find those pretty wayside Shrubberies, the Hedge-rows, and the Field-flower-borders that lie beneath and about them, less gay with new green, and less fantastic with flowers, than they have lately been; but they still vie with the Garden both in sweetness and in beauty. The new flowers they put forth this month are but few. Among these are the pretty little Meadow Scabious, with its small purple head standing away from its leaves; the various Goose-foots, curious for their leaves, feeling about like fingers for the fresh air; the Camomile, shooting up its troops of little suns, with their yellow centres and white rays; and a few more of lesser note. But, in addition to these, we have still many which have already had their greeting from us, *or should have had;* but really, when one comes every month, self-invited, to Nature's morning levees, and meets there flocks of flowers, every one of which claims as its single due a whole morning's attention, it must not be taken as unkind or impolite by any of them, if, in endeavouring hastily to record the company we met, for the benefit of those who were not there,

we should chance to forget some who may fancy themselves quite as worthy of having their presence recorded, and their court dresses described, as those who do figure in this Court Calendar of Nature. It is possible, too, that we may have fallen into some slight errors in regard to the places of residence of some of our fair flowery friends, and the particular day on which they first chose to make their appearance at Nature's court; for we are not among those reporters who take short-hand notes, or any other, but such as write themselves in the tablet of our memory. But if any lady *should* feel herself aggrieved in either of the above particulars, she has only to drop us a leaf to that effect, stating, at the same time, her name and residence, and she may be assured that we shall take the first opportunity of paying our personal respects to her, and shall have little doubt of satisfying her that our misconduct has arisen from any thing rather than a wilful neglect towards her pretensions, or a want of taste in appreciating them. In the mean time let us add, that, in addition to the new company which graces this month's levee, the following are still punctual in their attendance; namely, Woodbine, Woodruff, Meadow-sweet, and Wild

Thyme; (N. B. These ladies are still profuse in their use of perfumes); and, among those who depend on their beauty alone, Eyebright, Pansie, the lesser and greater Willow-herb, Daisy, two or three of the Orchises, Hyacinth, several sisters of the Speedwell and Pimpernel families, and the scentless Violet.

Now, after the middle of the month, commences that great rural employment to which all the hopes of the farmer's year have been tending; but which, unhappily, the mere labourer has come to regard with as much indifference as he does any of those which have successively led to it. This latter is not as it should be. But as we cannot hope to alter, let us not stay to lament over it. On the contrary, let us rejoice that at least Nature remains uninjured—that *she* shows more beautiful than ever at harvest time, whether Man chooses to be more happy then or not. It is true Harvest-home has changed its moral character, in the exact proportion that the people among whom it takes place have changed *theirs*, in becoming, from an agricultural, a mechanical and manufacturing nation; and we may soon expect to see the produce of the earth gathered in and laid by for use, almost without

the intervention of those for whose use it is provided, and in supplying whose wants it is chiefly consumed: for the rich, so far from being "able to live by bread alone," would scarcely feel the loss if it were wholly to fail them. But Nature is not to be changed by the devices which man employs to change and deteriorate himself. She has willed that the scenes attendant on the gathering in of her gifts shall be as fraught with beauty as ever. And accordingly, Harvest time is as delightful to look on to *us*, who are mere spectators of it, as it was in the Golden Age, when the gatherers and the rejoicers were one. Now, therefore, as then, the Fields are all alive with figures and groups, that seem, in the eye of the artist, to be made for pictures—pictures that he can see but one fault in; (which fault, by the bye, constitutes their only beauty in the eye of the farmer;) namely, that they will not stand still a moment, for him to paint them. He must therefore be content, as we are, to keep them as studies in the storehouse of his memory.

Here are a few of those studies, which he may practise upon till doomsday, and will not then be able to produce half the effect from them that will arise spontaneously on the imagination, at

the mere mention of the simplest words which can describe them:—The sunburnt Reapers, entering the Field leisurely at early morning, with their reaphooks resting on their right shoulders, and their beer-kegs swinging to their left hands, while they pause for a while to look about them before they begin their work.—The same, when they are scattered over the Field: some stooping to the ground over the prostrate Corn, others lifting up the heavy sheaves and supporting them against one another, while the rest are plying their busy sickles, before which the brave crop seems to retreat reluctantly, like a half-defeated army.—Again, the same collected together into one group, and resting to refresh themselves, while the lightening keg passes from one to another silently, and the rude clasp-knife lifts the coarse meal to the ruddy lips.—Lastly, the piled-up Wain, moving along heavily among the lessening sheaves, and swaying from side to side as it moves; while a few, whose share of the work is already done, lie about here and there in the shade, and watch the near completion of it.

I would fain have to describe the boisterous and happy revelries that used to ensue upon these scenes, and should do still. And what if

they were attended by mirth a little over-riotous, or a few broken crowns? Better so, than the troops of broken spirits that now linger amidst the overflowing plenty of the last Harvest-field, and begin to think where they shall wander in search of their next week's bread.

But no more of this. Let us turn at once to a few of the other occurrences that take place in the open Fields during this month. The Singing Birds are, for the most part, so busy in educating and providing for their young broods, that they have little time to practise their professional duties; consequently this month is comparatively a silent one in the Woods and Groves. There are some, however, whose happy hearts will not let them be still. The most persevering of these is that poet of the skies, the Lark. He still pours down a bright rain of melody through the morning, the mid-day, and the evening skies, till the whole air seems sparkling and alive with the light of his strains.—His sweet-hearted relation, the Woodlark, also still warbles high up in the warm evening air, and occasionally even at midnight—hovering at one particular spot during each successive strain. —The Goldfinch, the Yellowhammer, and the

Green and Brown Linnet, those pretty flutterers among the summer leaves,—as light hearted and restless as they,—still keep whistling snatches of their old songs, between their quick fairy-like flittings from bough to bough. As for the solitary Robin, his delicate song may be heard all through the year, and is peculiarly acceptable now in the neighbourhood of human dwellings—where no other is heard, unless it be the common wren's.

By the middle of this month we shall lose sight entirely of that most airy, active, and indefatigable of all the winged people,—the Swift—Shakespeare's "temple-haunting Martlet." Unlike the rest of its tribe, it breeds but once in the season; and its young having now acquired much of their astonishing power of wing, young and old all hurry away together—no one can tell whither. The sudden departure of the above singular species of the Swallow tribe, at this very moment, when every thing seems to conform together for their delight,—when the winds (which they shun) are hushed—and the Summer (in which they rejoice) is at its best—and the air (in which they feed) is laden with dainties for them—and all the troubles and anxieties attend-

ant on the coming of their young broods are at an end, and they are wise enough not to think of having more;—that, at the very moment when all these favourable circumstances are combining together to make them happy, they should suddenly, and without any assignable cause whatever, disappear, and go no one knows whither, is one of those facts, the explanation of which has hitherto baffled all our inquiring philosophizers, and will continue to do so while the said inquirers continue to judge of all things by analogies invented by their own boasted *reason:* as if reason were given us to explain instinct! and as if a being which passes its whole life on the wing —(for sleep is not a part of life, and the Swift, during its waking hours, never sets foot on tree or ground—almost realizing that fabled bird which has wings but no feet) were not likely to be gifted with any senses but such as *we* can trace the operations of! The truth is, all that we can make of this mysterious departure is, to accept it as an omen—the earliest, the most certain, and yet the least attended to, because it happens in the midst of smiling contradictions to it—that the departure of Summer herself is nigh at hand.

It is not good to cull out the sad points of reflection which present themselves, in the various subjects which come before us, in contemplating the operations of Nature. But as little is it good, studiously to avoid those points. Perhaps the only wise course is, to let them suggest what they will, of sadness or of joy — and then, so to receive and apply those suggestions, that even the sad ones themselves may be made subservient to good. To me, this early departure, in the very heart of our summer, of the most bird-like of all the birds that visit us only for a season, always comes at first like an omen of evil, that I cannot doubt, and yet will not believe. It might as well be told me, that the being who sits beside me now, in all the pomp of health, and all the lustre of loveliness, will leave me to-morrow, and go—like the bird—I know not whither. And yet, if such a prediction *were* made to me, what should I do in regard to it, but (as one ought in the case of the omen of departing summer) to *believe* that it is true, and yet *feel* that it is false; and, acting upon the joint impulse thus created, enjoy the blessing tenfold, while it remains mine, and leave the lamentations for its loss till I can no longer feel the delight that flows from its presence?

But, enough of philosophy—even of that which is intended to cure us of philosophizing. Let us get into the air and the sunshine again; which can bid us be happy in spite of all philosophy, and *will* be obeyed even by philosophers themselves,—who have long since found that they have no resource left against those enemies to their art, but to fly their presence, and shut themselves up in schools and studies.

The Swift, whose strange flight has for a moment led us astray from our course, is the only one of its tribe that has yet made any preparations towards departure: though the young broods of House-swallows and House-martins are evidently *thinking* of it, and congregating together in great flocks, about the tops of old towers and belfries, to talk the matter over, and wonder with one another what will happen to them in their projected travels—if they *do* travel. Their parents, however, who are to lead them, are still employed in increasing their company, and have just now brought out their second broods into the open air.

Now, on warm still evenings, we may sometimes see the whole air about us speckled with another class of emigrants, who are not usually

regarded as such; namely, the flying Ants, whom their own offspring, or their inclinations (for it is uncertain which), have expelled from their birth-place, to found new colonies, and find new habitations, where they can. It is a ticklish task to make people more knowing than they wish to be, and one which, even if I were qualified for the office, I should be very shy of undertaking. But when a race of comparatively foolish and improvident little creatures have for ages enjoyed the credit of being proverbial patterns of wisdom, prudence, and forethought, I cannot refuse to assist in dispelling the delusion. Be it known, then, to the elderly namesakes of the above, that when they bid their little nephews and nieces "go to the Ant, and consider its ways," they can scarcely offer them advice less likely to end, if followed, in teaching them to "be wise:" for, in fact, one of those "ways" is, to sleep ("sluggards" as they are!) all the winter through; another is, never to lay up a single morsel of store even for a day, much less for a whole year, as has been reported of them; and a third is, to do what they are in fact doing at this very moment—namely, to come out in myriads from their homes, and fill the air with that

food (themselves) which serves to fatten the *really* wise, prudent, and industrious Swallows and Martins, who are skimming through the air delightedly in search of it. It is true, the Ants are active enough in providing for their immediate wants, and artful enough in overcoming any obstacles to their immediate pleasures: But all this, and more, the *other* Aunts, who hold them up as patterns, will find their little pupils sufficiently expert in, without any assistance.

Now, we may observe that pretty pair of rural pictures (not, however, *peculiar* to this month); first, when the numerous Flock is driven to fold, as the day declines,—its scattered members converging towards a point as they enter the narrow opening of their nightly enclosure, which they gradually fill and settle into, as a shallow stream runs into a bed that has been prepared for it, and there settles into a still pool.—And again, in the early morning, when the slender barrier that confines them is removed, they crowd and hurry out at it,—gently intercepting each other; and as they get free, pour forth their white fleeces over the open field, as a lake that has broken its bank pours its waters over the adjoining land:

in each case, the bells and meek voices of the patient people making music as they move, and the Shepherd standing carelessly by (leaning on his crook, even as shepherds did in Arcady itself!) and leaving the care of all to his half-reasoning dog.

As I have again got my pencil in hand, instead of my pen, let me not forget to sketch a copy of that other pretty picture, at once so still and yet so lively, which may be had this month for the price of looking at, and than which Paul Potter himself could not have presented us with a sweeter: and indeed, but that he was a mere imitator of Nature, one might almost swear it to be his, not hers.—Fore-ground: on one side, a little shallow pond, with two or three pollard willows stooping over it; and on the other a low bank, before which stand as many more pollard willows, with round trim heads set formally on their straight pillar-like stems: between all these, the sunshine lying in bright streaks on the green ground, and made distinguishable by the straight shadows thrown by the thick stems of the trees. Middle distance: a moist meadow, level as a line, and on it half a dozen cattle; three lying at their

ease, and "chewing the cud of sweet" (not "bitter") herbage—two cropping the same—and one lifting up its grave matronly face, and lowing out into the side distance; while, about the legs of all of them, a little flock of Wagtails are glancing in and out merrily, picking up their delicate meal of invisible insects; and upon the very back of one of the ruminators, a pert Magpie has perched himself. Of the extreme distance, half is occupied by dim-seen willows, of the same stunted growth with those in front; and the rest shows indistinctly, and half hidden by trees, a little village,—its church spire pointing its silent finger straight upward, as if bidding us look at a sky scarcely less calm and sweet than the scene which it canopies.—How says the connoisseur? Is this a picture of Paul Potter's, or of Nature? But no matter,—for they are almost the same. There is only just enough difference between them to make us feel (as the possessor of twin children does) that we are blessed with *two* instead of *one*.

In the Plantation and Flower-garden we must hardly expect to find much of novelty, after the profusion of last month. And in fact there are very few flowers the first appearance of which

can be said to be absolutely *peculiar* to this month; most of those hitherto unnamed choosing to be the medium of a pleasant interchange between the two months, according as seasons, and circumstances of soil and planting, may dispose them. It must be admitted, however (though I am very loth, even by implication, to dissever this month from absolute summer), that many of the flowers which do come forward now are *autumn* ones. Conspicuous among those which first appear in this month, is the stately Holy-oak; a plant whose pretensions are not so generally admitted as they ought to be, probably on account of its having, by some strange accident, lost its character for *gentility*. Has this (in the present day) dire misfortune happened to it, because it condescends to flower in as much splendour and variety when leaning beside low cottage porches, or spiring over broken and lichen-grown palings, as it does in the gardens of the great? I hope not; for then those who contemn it must do the same by the vaunted Rose, and the rich Carnation; for where do *they* blow better than in the daisy-bordered flower-beds of the poor? The only plausible plea which I can discover, for the reasonableness of banishing from our

choice parterres this most magnificent of all their inhabitants, is, that its aspiring and oriental splendour may put to shame the less conspicuous beauties of Flora's court. I hope the latter have not, through envy, been entering into a conspiracy to fix an ill name upon the Holyoak, and thus stir up in the hearts of their admirers a dislike to it, that nothing else is so likely to produce: for, give even a flower "an ill name," and you may as well treat it like a dog at once. In fact, I do not think that any thing short of calling it *ungenteel* could have displaced the Holyoak from that universal favour with us which it always acquires during our youth, in virtue of its being the only flower that we can distinguish in "garden scenes" on the stage.

As the Holyoak is at present a less *petted* flower than any other, perhaps the Passion-flower (which blows this month) is, of all those which bear the open air, the most so; and, I must say, with quite as little reason. In fact, its virtue lies in its name; which it owes, however, to its fantastical construction suggesting certain religious associations, and not to any romantic or sentimental ones; which latter, when connected with it, have grown out of its name,

and not its name out of them. If, however, it has little that is beautiful and flower-like about it, it has something bizarre and recherchée, which is well worth examining. But we examine it as we would a watch or a compass, and not a flower; which is its great fault. It is to other flowers, what a Blue-stocking is to other women.

Among the other flowers that appear now, the most conspicuous, and most beautiful, is that one of the Campanulas which shoots up from its cluster of low leaves one or more tall straight spires, clustered around from heel to point with brilliant sky-blue stars, crowding as closely to each other as those in the milky way,—till they look like one continuous rod of blue, or like the sky-blue ribbons on the mane of a Lord Mayor's coach-horse. These are the flowers that you see in pots, trained into a fan-like shape, till they cover, with their brilliant galaxy of stars, the whole window of the snug parlour where sits at her work the wife of the village apothecary. Of course I speak of a not less distance from town than a long day's journey: any nearer than that, all flowers but exotics have long since been banished from parlour windows, as highly ungenteel.

There are a few other very noticeable flowers, which begin to show themselves to us late in this month; but as they by rights rank among the autumn ones, and as I am not willing to admit that we have as yet arrived even on the confines of that season, I must consider that they have chosen to come before their time, and treat them accordingly.

In the Shrubbery, too, we shall find little of novelty. We will, therefore, at once pass through it, and reach the Orchard and Fruit Garden; merely observing as we go, that the Elder is beginning to cast a tinge of autumnal purple on its profuse berries; that those of the Rowan, or Mountain Ash, are on the point of putting on their scarlet liveries, which they are to wear all the winter; and that the Purple Clematis is heavy with its handsome flowers.

Perhaps the Fruit-Garden is never in a more favourable state for observation than at present; for most of its produce is sufficiently advanced to have put on all its beauty, while but little of it is in a state to disturb: so that there it hangs in the sight of its satisfied owner—at once a promise, and a fulfilment, without the attendant ills of either.

The inferior fruit, indeed (so at least it is reckoned with us, though in the East Indies a plate of Currants is sometimes placed in the centre of the table, as a Pine-apple is here, and holds exactly the same relative value in respect to the rest of the dessert), the Currants and Gooseberries are now in perfection, and those epicures from the nursery, who alone condescend to eat them in their natural state, may now be turned loose among them with impunity. A few of the Apples, too, are now asking to be plucked; namely, the pretty little, tender, and pale-faced Jeannotin (vulgaricè *Gennett'n*); the rude-shaped, but firm, sweet, and rosy-cheeked Codling; and the cool, crisp, and refreshing Nonsuch,—eating, when at its best, like a glass of Apple-ice; and with a shape and make which entitles it to be called the very Apollo of Apples.

The Cherries, too, have most of them acquired their "cherry-cheeks," and are looking down temptation

> "Unto the white upturned wond'ring eyes
> Of *school-boys*, that fall back to gaze on them,"

as they hang over the garden-wall, next to the road.

As to the other fruits, they look almost as handsome and inviting as ever they will. But we must be content to let them "enjoy the air they breathe" for a month or so longer, if we expect them to do the same by us.

Of London what shall we say, at this only one of its seasons when it has nothing to say for itself? when even the most immoveable of its citizens become migratory for at least a month, and permit their wives and daughters to play the parts of mermaids on the shores of Margate, while they themselves pore over the evening papers all the morning, and over the morning ones all the evening?—when 'Change Alley makes a transfer of half its (live) stock every Saturday to the Steine at Brighton, to be returnable by Snow's coaches on Monday morning?—nay, when even the lawyers' clerks themselves begin to grow romantic, and, neglecting their accustomed evening haunts at the Cock in Fleet-street, Offley's, and the Cider Cellar, permit themselves to be steamed down from Billingsgate to Broadstairs, where they meditate moonlight sonnets to their absent Seraphinas (not without an eye to half-a-guinea each in the magazines),

beginning with "Oh, come unto these yellow sands!"

What *can* be said of the Town at a time like this? The truth is, I am not disposed to quarrel with London (any more than I am with my "bread and butter," and for a similar reason) at any season; so that the less I say or think of it now the better. Suffice it, that London in August is a species of nonentity, to all but those amateur architects who "go partnerships" in candle-lit grottos at the corners of courts. But, *en revanche*, it is to them a month that, like May to the chimney-sweepers, "only comes once a year."

SEPTEMBER.

I AM sorry to mention it, but the truth must be told, even in a matter of age. The Year, then, is on the wane. It is "declining into the vale" of months. It has reached "a certain age." Its *bloom* (that indescribable something which surpasses and supersedes all mere beauty) is fled, and with it all its pretensions to be regarded as an object of passionate admiration.

A truce, then, to our treatment of the Months as mistresses. But let us henceforth look upon them as the next best thing, as dear and devoted friends: for

> "Turn wheresoe'er we may,
> By night or day,
> The things which we have seen we now can see no more."

'Tis true that still

> "The Rainbow comes and goes,
> * * *
> The moon doth with delight
> Look round her when the heavens are bare;

Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;—
But yet we know, where'er we go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the Earth."

Let me be permitted to make use of a few more words from the same poem; for by no others can I hope so well to kindle in the reader, that feeling with which I would fain have him possessed, on the advent of this still delightful season of the year, if it be but received and enjoyed in the spirit in which it comes to us.

"What," then——

"What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from our sight—
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not—rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which, having been, must ever be;
* * * *
In the faith that looks through death;
In thoughts that bring the philosophic mind."

I cannot choose but continue this strain a little longer; and I suppose my readers will be the last persons to complain of my doing so; it is the poet alone who will have cause to object to his meanings throughout, and in one or two instances his words, being diverted from their

original purpose, but I hope not degraded in their application, nor disenchanted of their power.

"And oh! ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Think not of any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might.
* * * *
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That watches o'er the Year's mortality.
* * * *
Thanks to the human heart by which we live;
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears;
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Reader, this is said by the greatest poet of our age, and one of the deepest, wisest, and most virtuous of her philosophic sages. And it is said by him even in the sense in which it is here applied, *now that it has been once so applied:* for much of his words have this in common with those of Shakspeare, that you may turn them to an almost equally apt and good account in many different ways, besides those in which they were at first directed. Let them be received, then, in the spirit in which they are here uttered, and we shall be able and entitled to continue our task, of following the year through its vicissi-

tudes, and still (as we began it) "pursue our course to the end, rejoicing."

The youth of the year is gone, then. Even the vigour and lustihood of its maturity are quick passing away. It has reached the summit of the hill, and is not only looking, but descending, into the valley below. But, unlike that into which the life of man declines, *this* is not a vale of tears; still less does it, like that, lead to that inevitable bourne, the Kingdom of the Grave. For though it may be called (I hope without the semblance of profanation) "The Valley of the *Shadow* of Death," yet of Death itself it knows nothing. No—the year steps onward towards its temporary decay, if not so rejoicingly, even more majestically and gracefully, than it does towards its revivification. And if September is not so bright with promise and so buoyant with hope as May, it is even more embued with that spirit of serene repose, in which the only true, because the only continuous enjoyment consists. Spring "never *is*, but always *to be* blest;" but September is the month of consummations—the fulfiller of all promises—the fruition of all hopes—the era of all completeness. Let us then turn at once to gaze on, and

partake in, its manifold beauties and blessings, not let them pass us by, with the empty salutation of mere praise; for the only panegyric that is acceptable to Nature is that just appreciation of her gifts which consists in the full enjoyment of them.

Supposing ourselves, as usual, in the middle of the month, we shall find the seed Harvests quite completed, and even the ground on which they stood appearing under an entirely new aspect,—the Plough having opened, or being now in the act of opening, its fragrant breast, and exposing it for a while to the genial influence of the sun and air, before it is again called upon to perform its never-failing functions.

There are other Harvests, however, which are still to be gathered in; in particular, that most elegant and picturesque of all with which this country is acquainted, and which may also be considered as *peculiar* to this country, upon any thing like a great scale: I mean the Hop Harvest. In the few counties in which this plant is cultivated, we are now presented with the nearest semblance we can boast, of the Vintages of Italy and Spain.

The Apple Harvest, too, of the Cider counties takes place this month; and though I must not represent it as very fertile in the elegant and picturesque, let me not neglect to do justice to its produce, as the only one deserving the name of British Wine; all other so-called liquors being, the reader may rest assured, worse than poisons, in the exact proportion that specious hypocrites are worse than open, bold-faced villains.

I hope the good housewives of my country (the only country in the world which produces the breed) need not be told, that, in thus placarding the impostor above-named, I have not the slightest thought of hurting the high reputation of her immaculate "home-made," which she so generously brings out from the bottom division of her shining beaufet, and presses (somewhat importunately) on every morning comer. She shall never have to ask me twice to taste even a second glass of it, always provided she calls it by its true and trustworthy name, of "home-made"—to which, in *my* vocabulary, Montepulciano itself must yield the pas. But if, bitten perhaps by some London Bagman, she happen to have contracted an affection for fine phrases, and

chooses to call her cordial by the style and title of "*British wine*"—away with it, for me! I would not touch it,

"Though 'twere a draught for Juno when she banquets."

In fact, she might as well call it *Cape* at once!

The truth is, I once, to oblige an elderly lady at Hackney, *did* taste two glasses of "British wine" at a sitting; and my stomach has had a load (of sugar of lead) upon its conscience ever since.

It must be confessed, that the general face of the country has undergone a very material change for the worse since we left it last month; and none of its individual features, with the exception of the Woods and Groves, have improved in their appearance. The Fields are for the most part bare, and either black and arid with the remains of the Harvest that has been gathered from them, or at best but newly furrowed by the plough. The ever green Meadows are indeed still beautiful, and the more so for the Cattle that now stud them almost every where; the second crops of grass being long since off. The Hedge-rows, too, have lost much of their sweet tapestry of flowers, and even their late many-tinted greens are sobered down into one

dull monotonous hue. And the berries and other wild fruits that the latter part of the season produces, do not vary this hue,—having none of them as yet assumed the colours of their maturity. It is true the Woodbine again flings up, here and there, its bunches of pale flowers, after having ceased to do so for many weeks. But they have no longer the rich luxuriance of their Spring bloom, nor even the delicious scent which belonged to them when the vigour of youth was upon them. They are the pale and feeble offspring of the declining life of their parent.

It follows, from this general absence of wild flowers, that we are now no longer greeted, on our morning or evening wanderings, by those exquisite odours that float about upon the wings of every Summer wind, and come upon the captivated sense like strains of unseen music.

Even the Summer birds, both songsters and others, begin to leave us—urged thereto by a prophetic instinct, that will not be disobeyed: for if they were to consult their *feelings* merely, there is no season at which the temperature of our climate is more delightfully adapted to their pleasures and their wants.

But let it not be supposed that we have nothing to compensate for all these losses. The Woods and Groves, those grandest and most striking among the general features of the country, are now, towards the end of the month, beginning to put on their richest looks. The Firs are gradually darkening towards their winter blackness; the Oaks, Limes, Poplars, and Horse-chestnuts, still retain their darkest summer green; the Elms and Beeches are changing to that bright yellow which produces, at a distance, the effect of patches of sunshine; and the Sycamores are beginning, here and there, to assume a brilliant warmth of hue almost amounting to scarlet. The distant effect, therefore, of a great company of all these seen together, and intermingled with each other, is finer than it has hitherto been, though not equal in beauty and variety to what it will be about the same time next month.

But we have some other pretty sights belonging to the open country, which must not be passed over; and one which the whole year, in point of time, and the whole world, in point of place, can scarcely parallel. The Sunsets of

September in this country are perhaps unrivalled, for their infinite variety, and their indescribable beauty. Those of more southern countries may perhaps match, or even surpass them, for a certain glowing and unbroken intensity. But for gorgeous variety of form and colour, exquisite delicacy of tint and pencilling, and a certain placid sweetness and tenderness of general effect, which frequently arises out of a union of the two latter, there is nothing to be seen like what we can show in England at this season of the year. If a painter, who was capable of doing it to the utmost perfection, were to dare depict on canvas one out of twenty of the Sunsets that we frequently have during this month, he would be laughed at for his pains. And the reason is, that people judge of pictures by pictures. They compare Hobbima with Ruysdael, and Ruysdael with Wynants, and Wynants with Wouvermans, and Wouvermans with Potter, and Potter with Cuyp; and then they think the affair can proceed no farther. And the chances are, that if you were to show one of the sunsets in question to a thorough-paced connoisseur in this department of Fine Art, he would reply, that it was very

beautiful, to be sure, but that he must beg to doubt whether it was *natural*, for he had never seen one like it in any of the old masters!

Another singular sight belonging to this period, is the occasional showers of gossamer that fall from the upper regions of the air, and cover every thing like a veil of woven silver. You may see them descending through the sunshine, and glittering and flickering in it, like rays of another kind of light. Or if you are in time to observe them before the Sun has dried the dew from off them in the early morning, they look like robes of fairy tissue-work, gemmed with innumerable jewels.

Now, too, Thistle-down, and the beautiful winged seeds of the Dandelion, float along through the calm air upon their voyages of discovery, as if instinct with life.

Now, among the Birds, we have something like a renewal of the Spring melodies. In particular, the Thrush and Blackbird, who have been silent for several weeks, recommence their songs,—bidding good bye to the Summer, in the same subdued tone in which they hailed her approach.

Finally, in connexion with the open country,

now Wood-owls hoot louder than ever; and the Lambs bleat shrilly from the hill-side to their neglectful dams; and the thresher's Flail is heard from the unseen barn; and the plough-boy's whistle comes through the silent air from the distant upland; and Snakes leave their last year's skins in the brakes—literally creeping out at their own mouths; and Acorns drop in showers from the oaks, at every wind that blows; and Hazel-nuts ask to be plucked, so invitingly do they look forth from their green dwellings; and, lastly, the evenings close in too quickly upon the walks to which their serene beauty invites us, and the mornings get chilly, misty, and damp.

Thanks to the art of the cultivator, we shall find the Garden almost as gay with flowers as it was last month; for many of those of last month still remain; and a few, and those among the most gorgeous that blow, have only just opened. The chief of these latter is the China-aster; the superb *Reine Marguerite*, whose endless variety of stars shoot up in rich clusters, and glow like so many lighted catherine-wheels. The great climbing Convolvulus also hangs out its beautiful cups among its smooth and clustering leaves; and the rich aromatic Scabious lifts up its glow-

ing purple flowers on their lithe stems; and the profuse Dahlia, that beautiful novelty, which was till so lately almost unknown to us, scatters about its rich double and single blooms, some of them so intense in colour that they seem to *glow* as you look upon them. And lastly, now the pendulous Amaranth hangs its gentle head despondingly, and tells its tender tale almost as pathetically as the poem to which it gives a name*.

Among the flowering Shrubs, too, we have now some of the most beautiful at their best. In particular, the Althea Frutex, and the Arbutus, or Strawberry-tree.

As for the Fruit Garden, *that* is one scene of tempting profusion. Against the wall, the Grapes have put on that transparent look which indicates their complete ripeness, and have dressed their cheeks in that delicate bloom which enables them to bear away the bell of beauty from all their rivals.—The Peaches and Nectarines have become fragrant, and the whole wall where they hang is "musical with bees."—Along the Espaliers, the rosy-cheeked Apples look out from

* "O'Connor's Child; or the Flower of Love lies Bleeding."

among their leaves, like laughing children peeping at each other through screens of foliage; and the young standards bend their straggling boughs to the earth with the weight of their produce.

Quitting the Country, we shall find London but ill qualified to compensate us for the losses we have sustained there; and if there be any reason in betaking oneself to places at the seaside, that are neither London nor the Country, now is the time to do it—as the citizens of London, and the liberties thereof, know full well. Accordingly, now the mansions in Finsbury and Devonshire Squares on the East, and Queen and Russell on the West, are changed for mouse-traps (miscalled marine villas); and the tradesman who does not send his wife and family to wash themselves in sea-water cannot be doing well in the world. Now, therefore, the Brighton boarding-houses bask in the sunshine of city favour, always provided their drawing-rooms look upon the sea; and if you pass them on a warm afternoon about five o'clock, you may see their dining-room windows wide open, and their

inmates acting a picturesque passage in one of Mr. Wordsworth's pastorals:

"There are forty feeding like one."

But if the citizens (because they cannot help it) permit their wives and daughters to be in their glory, *out* of London at this period, they permit their apprentices, for the same reason, to be so *in* it: for now arrives that Saturnalia of nondescript noise and nonconformity, Bartlemy Fair;—when that Prince of peace-officers, the Lord Mayor, changes his sword of state into a sixpenny trumpet, and becomes the Lord of Misrule and the patron of pickpockets; and Lady Holland's name leads an unlettered mob instead of a lettered one; when Mr. Richardson maintains, during three whole days and a half, a managerial supremacy that must be not a little enviable even in the eyes of Mr. Elliston himself; and Mr. Gyngell holds, during the same period, a scarcely less distinguished station as the Apollo of servant-maids; when "the incomparable (not to say *eternal*) *young* Master Saunders" rides on horseback to the admiration of all beholders, in the person of his eldest son; and when all the giants in the land, and the dwarfs too,

make a general muster, and each proves to be, according to the most correct measurement, at least a foot taller or shorter than any other in the fair, and, in fact, the only one worth seeing,—"all the rest being impostors!" In short, when every booth in the fair combines in itself the attractions of all the rest, and so perplexes with its irresistible merit the rapt imagination of the half-holiday schoolboys who have got but sixpence to spend upon the whole, that they eye the outsides of each in a state of pleasing despair, till their leave of absence is expired twice over, and then return home filled with visions of giants and gingerbread-nuts, and dream all night long of what they have *not* seen.

Au reste, London must needs be but a sorry place in September, when even its substantial shopkeepers are ashamed to be seen in it, and when a careful porter may, if he pleases, carry a load on his head from Saint Paul's to the Mansion House, without damaging the heads of more than half a dozen pedestrians.

As for the West End at this period, it looks like a model of itself, seen through a magnifying glass—every thing is so sad, silent, and empty of life. The vacant windows look blank at each

other across the way; the doors and their knockers are no more at variance; the porters sleep away the heavy hours in their easy chairs, leaving the rings to be answered from the area; and if you want to cross the street, you look both ways first, for fear of being run over—thinking, from the absolute stillness, that the stones of the pavement have been put to silence by the art-magic of Mr. Macadam.

But notwithstanding all this, the Winter Theatres, having permitted their Summer rivals to play to empty benches for nearly three months, now put in their claim to share this pleasing privilege, lest it should be supposed that they too cannot afford to lose a hundred pounds a night as well as their inferiors. Accordingly, every body can have orders now (except those who ask for them); and the pit is the only place for those who are above sitting on the same bench with their boot-maker.

Let us not forget to add, that there is *one* part of London which is never out of season, and is never more *in* season than now. Covent Garden Market is still the Garden of Gardens; and as there is not a month in all the year in which it does not contrive to belie something or

other that has been said in the foregoing pages, as to the particular season of certain flowers, fruits, &c. so now it offers the flowers and the fruits of every season united. How it becomes possessed of all these, I shall not pretend to say: but thus much I am bound to add by way of information,—that those ladies and gentlemen who have country houses in the neighbourhood of Clapham Common or Camberwell Grove, may now have the pleasure of eating the best fruit out of their own Gardens—provided they choose to pay the price of it in Covent Garden Market!

OCTOBER.

THEY tell us, in regard to this voyage of ours, called Human Life, that

> "Hope travels through, nor leaves us till we die."

But they might have gone still farther, and shown us that Hope is not only our companion on the journey, but at once the vehicle which bears us along, the food which supports us as we go, and the goal to which all our travels tend, not merely in the great voyage of discovery itself, but in all the little outlets and byeways which break in upon and diversify it.

Even in regard to the objects of external nature, Hope is the great principle on which we take any thing like a continuous moral interest in the contemplation of them; and if we never cease to feel that interest during all the different periods of the year, it is because hope is no sooner lost in fruition, than, like the Phœnix, it revives again, and keeps fluttering on before us, like the beautiful Green Bird before the lover, in

the fairy tale; leading us—no matter where, so that it do not leave us to plod on by ourselves, through a world that, however beautiful *with* it, were without it an overpeopled wilderness.

The month that we have just left behind us was indeed one made up, for the most part, of consummations; the promises of the year being almost forgotten in the fulness of their performance, and the season standing still to enjoy itself, and to let its admirers satiate themselves upon the rich completeness of its charms. It is now gone; and October is come; and Hope is come with it; and the general impulse that we feel is, to *look forward* again, as we have done from the beginning of the year.

It must be confessed, however, that the hopes of *this* month, in particular, are not unblended with that sentiment of melancholy—gentle and genial, but still melancholy—which results from the constant presence of decay. The year has reached its grand climacteric, and is fast falling "into the sere, the yellow leaf." Every day a flower drops from out the wreath that binds its brow—not to be renewed. Every hour the Sun looks more and more askance upon it, and the winds, those Summer flatterers, come to it less

fawningly. Every breath shakes down showers of its leafy attire, leaving it gradually barer and barer, for the blasts of winter to blow through it. Every morning and evening takes away from it a portion of that light which gives beauty to its life, and chills it more and more into that torpor which at length constitutes its temporary death. And yet October is beautiful still, no less "for what it gives than what it takes away;" and even for what it gives during the very act of taking away.

Let us begin our observations with an example of the latter. The whole year cannot produce a sight fraught with more rich and harmonious beauty than that which the Woods and Groves present during this month, notwithstanding, or rather in consequence of, the daily decay of their summer attire; and at no other season can any given spot of landscape be seen to much advantage as a mere picture. This, therefore, is, above all others, the month for the artist to ply his delightful task, of fixing the fugitive beauties of the scene; which, however, he must do quickly, for they fade away, day by day, as he looks upon them.

And yet, if it were represented faithfully, an extensive plantation of Forest Trees now presents a variety of colours and of tints that would scarcely be considered as *natural* in a picture, any more than many of the Sunsets of September would. Among those trees which retain their green hues, the Fir tribe are the principal; and these, spiring up among the deciduous ones, now differ from them no less in colour than they do in form. The Alders, too, and the Poplars, Limes, and Horse-chestnuts, are still green,—the hues of their leaves not undergoing much change as long as they remain on the branches. Most of the other Forest Trees have put on each its peculiar livery; the Planes and Sycamores presenting every variety of tinge, from bright yellow to brilliant red; the Elms being, for the most part, of a rich sunny umber, varying according to the age of the tree and the circumstances of its soil, &c.; the Beeches having deepened into a warm glowing brown, which the young ones will retain all the winter, and till the new spring leaves push the present ones off; the Oaks varying from a dull dusky green to a deep russet, according to their ages; and the

Spanish Chestnuts, with their noble embowering heads, glowing like clouds of gold.

As for the Hedge-rows this month, they still retain all their effect as part of a general and distant view; and when looked at more closely, though they have lost nearly all their flowers, the various fruits that are spread out upon them for the winter food of the birds, make them little less gay than they were in Spring and Summer. The most conspicuous of these are the red hips of the Wild Rose; the dark purple bunches of the luxuriant Blackberry; the brilliant scarlet and green berries of the Nightshade; the wintry-looking fruit of the Hawthorn; the blue Sloes, covered with their soft tempting-looking bloom; the dull bunches of the Woodbine; and the sparkling Holly-berries.

We may also still, by seeking for them, find a few flowers scattered about beneath the Hedge-rows, and the dry Banks that skirt the Woods, and even in the Woods themselves, peeping up meekly from among the crowds of newly fallen leaves. The prettiest of these is the Primrose, which now blows a second time. But two or three of the Persicaria tribe are still in flower, and also some of the Goosefoots. And even the

elegant and fragile Heathbell, or Harebell, has not yet quite disappeared; while some of the ground flowers that have passed away have left in their place strange evidences of their late presence; in particular, the singular flower (if it can be called one) of the Arums, or Lords and Ladies, has changed into an upright bunch, or long cluster, of red berries, starting up from out the ground on a single stiff stem, and looking almost like the flower of a Hyacinth.

The open Fields during this month, though they are bereaved of much of their actual beauty and variety, present sights that are as agreeable to the eye, and even more stirring to the imagination, than those which have passed away. The Husbandman is now ploughing up the arable land, and putting into it the seeds that are to produce the next year's crops; and there are not, among rural occupations, two more pleasant to look upon than these: the latter, in particular, is one that, while it gives perfect satisfaction to the eye as a mere picture, awakens and fills the imagination with the prospective views which it opens.

Another very lively rural sight, on account of the many hands that it employs at the same

time, men, women, and children, is the general Potato gathering of this month.

Among the miscellaneous events of October, one of the most striking and curious is the interchange which seems to take place between our country, and the more northern as well as the more southern ones, in regard to the Birds. The Swallow tribe now all quit us; the Swift disappeared wholly, more than a month ago; and now the House Swallow, House Martin, and Bank or Sand Martin, after congregating for awhile in vast flocks about the banks of rivers and other waters, are seen no more as general frequenters of the air. And if one or two *are* seen during the warm days that sometimes occur for the next two or three weeks, they are to be looked upon as strangers and wanderers; and the sight of them, which has hitherto been so pleasant, becomes altogether different in its effect: it gives one a feeling of desolateness, such as we experience on meeting a poor shivering Lascar in our winter streets.

In exchange for this tribe of truly Summer visitors, we have now great flocks of the Fieldfares and Redwings come back to us; and also

Wood Pigeons, Snipes, Woodcocks, and several of the numerous tribe of Water-fowl.

Now, occasionally, we may observe the singular effects of a mist, coming gradually on, and wrapping in its dusky cloak a whole landscape that was, the moment before, clear and bright as in a Spring morning. The vapour rises visibly (from the face of a distant river perhaps) like steam from a boiling caldron; and climbing up into the blue air as it advances, rolls wreath over wreath till it reaches the spot on which you are standing; and then, seeming to hurry past you, its edges, which have hitherto been distinctly defined, become no longer visible, and the whole scene of beauty, which a few moments before surrounded you, is as it were wrapt from your sight like an unreal vision of the air, and you seem (and in fact *are*) transferred into the bosom of a cloud.

Drawing towards the home scene, we find the Orchard by no means devoid of interest this month. The Apples are among the last to shed their leaves; so that they retain them yet; and in some cases of late fruit, they retain that too, —looking as bright and tempting as ever it did.

The Cherry-trees, too, are more beautiful at this time than ever they have been since their brief period of blossoming, on account of the brilliant scarlet which their leaves assume,—varying, however, from that colour all the way through the warm ones, up to the bright yellow. There are also two species of the Plum, the Purple and the White Damson, which have only now reached their maturity.

The Elders, that frequently skirt the Orchard, or form part of its bounding hedge, are also now loaded with their broad outspread bunches of purple and white berries, and instantly call up (to those who are lucky enough to possess such an association at all) that ideal of old English snugness and comfort, the farm-house chimney corner, on a cold winter's Saturday night; with the jug of hot Elder-wine on the red brick hearth; the embers crackling and blazing; the toasted bread, and the long-stemmed glasses on the two-flapped oak table; and the happy ruddy faces of the young ones around, looking expectantly towards the comely and portly dame for their weekly *treat*.

The gentle (query *genteel*) reader will be good enough to remember that I am now speak-

ing of old times; that is to say, twenty years ago; and will not suppose me ignorant enough to imagine that *they* can possibly know what I mean either by "*Elder-wine*," or a "*chimney corner*." But though the merits of mulled claret, an ottoman, and a hearth-rug, shall never be called in question by me, I must be excused for remembering that there *was* a time when I knew no better than the above, and that I have not grown wise enough to cease sighing for the return of that time ever since it has passed away. Accordingly, though I would on no account be supposed to permit Elder-wine to pass my actual palate, I could not resist the above occasion of tasting it once more in imagination; and I must say, that the flavour of it is quite as agreeable as it was before claret became a common-place.

Now is the time for performing another of those praiseworthy operations which modern refinement has driven almost out of fashion. I mean the brewing of Beer that is to be called, *par excellence*, "October," some ten or fifteen years hence, when it is worth drinking. Country folks brew as usual, it is true; because the drink which is sent them down by the London dealers is what they cannot comprehend: but it has be-

come a regular monthly work; bearing, however, about the same relation to those of the good old times which have passed away, as the innumerable "twopenny trash" of the present day do to the good old "Gentleman's Magazine" that they have almost superseded. Brewing, nowadays, (thanks to Mr. Cobbet's Cottage Economy) is an affair of a tea-kettle, a washing-tub, and a currant-wine cask; and "October," now, will scarcely keep till November.

Now, the Hives are despoiled of their honey; and by one of those sad necessities attendant on artificial life, the hitherto happy and industrious collectors of it are rewarded with death for their pains.

It is not till this month that we usually experience the Equinoxial Gales, those fatal visitations which may now be looked upon as the immediate heralds of the coming on of Winter; as in the Spring they were the sure signs of its having passed away. Bitter-sweet is it, now, to lie awake at night, and listen wilfully (as if we would not let them escape us) to the fierce howlings of the winds, each accession of which gives new vividness to the vision of some tall ship,

illumined by every flash of lightning—illumined, but not rendered *visible*—for there are no eyes within a hundred leagues to look upon it; and crowded with human beings—(not "souls" only, as the sea-phrase is, for then it were pastime—but *bodies*) every one of which sees, in imagination, its own grave a thousand fathom deep beneath the dark waters that roar around, and feels itself there beforehand.

Returning to the home enclosures, we shall find them far from destitute of attraction; and indeed if they have been properly attended to, with a view to that almost unceasing succession of which the various objects of cultivation admit, we shall scarcely as yet perceive any of the ravages which the mere approach of Winter has already made among their uncultivated kindred.

In the Flower Garden, if much of the beauty of Summer has now passed away, its place has been supplied by that which affords one of the pleasantest employments of the lover of gardening; for those who do not grow and collect their own seeds know but half the pleasures of that most delightful of all merely physical occupations. The principal flower seeds come to per-

fection this month, and are now to be gathered and laid by, before they scatter themselves abroad at random.

Now, too, is the time for employing another and an equally fertile and interesting mode of propagation; that by means of offsets, suckers, cuttings, partings, &c. Now, in short, most of the fibrous-rooted perennial plants (regardless of Mr. Malthus's principles of population) put forth more offspring than the ground which they occupy can support; and unless the Government under which they live were to provide them with due means of colonization, they would presently over-run and destroy each other, until the whole kingdom, which now belongs to them jointly, became the exclusive property and possession of some one powerful but worthless family among them: as we see on lands that are left to themselves, and suffered to lie waste: whatever variety of plants may spring up spontaneously upon them during the first season or two, at the end of three or four years all is one unbroken expanse of rank unproductive grass.

It may be a childish pleasure, perhaps, but it is a very unequivocal and a very innocent one, to

bid the perennial plants "increase and multiply," and to see how aptly and willingly they obey the mandate. Making plants by this means is a pleasant substitute for making money, to those who have none of the latter to begin with. Indeed I question whether a dozen money-bags, made out of one, ever yet afforded the maker half the real satisfaction that a dozen Daisies have done, multiplied in a similar manner. Not that I can pretend to judge by experience of the comparative merits of these multiplication tables; and I am liberal enough to be willing to give the former a fair trial, on the very first opportunity that offers itself.

But though most of the Garden plants are now busily employed in disseminating themselves by seeds and offsets, many of them are still wearing their merely ornamental attire, and looking about them for admiration as if they were made for nothing else. If the arrangements of the borders have been attended to with a properly prospective eye, they still present us with several of the Amaranths, and particularly the everlasting ones; with some of the finest Dahlias; the great climbing Convolvolus; French

and African Marigolds, which have now increased to almost the size of flowering shrubs; Scabious; China-Asters; Golden-rod; the interminable Stocks; and, running about among them all, and flowering almost as profusely and as prettily as ever, sweet-breathing Mignonette.

Among the Shrubs, too, there are still some whose flowers continue to look the coming Winter in the face. In particular, the Arbutus is in all its beauty,—hanging forth, like the Orange, its flowers, fruit, and leaves, all at once. The Ivy, too, is covered with its unassuming blossoms, which are as rich in honey as they are poor in show, and are rifled of their sweets by the all-wooing bees, with even more avidity than the fantastical Passion-flower, or the flaunting Rose.

It is a little singular that the most gorgeous show which the Garden presents during the whole year should occur at this late period of the season, and without the intervention of flowers. I allude to the splendid foliage of the Great Virginian Creeper, which may now be seen hanging out its scarlet banners against some high battlement, or wreathing them into gay and graceful tapestry about the mouldering walls

of some old watch-tower, or, still more appropriately, fringing and festooning the embayed windows of some secluded building, sacred to the silence of study and contemplation. If I remember rightly, some beautiful examples of it, under the latter character, may be seen in two or three of the inner quadrangles both of Oxford and Cambridge.

Finally, now, that at once wildest and tamest of birds, most social and most solitary, the Robin, first begins to place its trust in man; flitting about the feet of the Gardener, as he turns up the freshened earth, and taking its food almost from the spade as it moves in his hand; or standing at a little distance from him among the fallen leaves, and singing plaintively, as if practising beforehand the dirge of the departing year.

October is to London what April is to the Country; it is the Spring of the London Summer, when the hopes of the shopkeeper begin to bud forth, and he lays aside the insupportable labour of having nothing to do, for the delightful leisure of preparing to be in a perpetual bustle. During the last month or two he has been strenuously

endeavouring to persuade himself that the Steyne at Brighton is as healthy as Bond-street; the *pavé* of Pall Mall no more picturesque than the Pantiles of Tunbridge Wells; and winning a prize at one-card-loo at Margate as piquant a process as serving a customer to the same amount of profit. But now that the time is returned when "business" must again be attended to, he discards with contempt all such mischievous heresies, and re-embraces the only orthodox faith of a London shopkeeper—that London and his shop are the true "beauteous and sublime" of human life. In fact, "now is the winter of his discontent" (that is to say, what other people call Summer) "made glorious Summer" by the near approach of Winter; and all the wit he is master of is put in requisition, to devise the means of proving that every thing he has offered to "his friends the public," up to this particular period, has become worse than obsolete. Accordingly, now are those poets of the shopkeepers, the inventors of patterns, "perplexed in the extreme;" since, unless they can produce a something which shall necessarily supersede all their previous productions, their occupation's gone.

It is the same with all other caterers for the

public taste; even the literary ones. Mr. Elliston, "ever anxious to contribute to the amusement of his liberal patrons, the public," is already busied in sowing the seeds of a New Tragedy, two Operatic Romances, three Grand Romantic Melodrames, and half a dozen Farces, in the fertile soil of those *poets* whom he employs in each of these departments respectively; while each of the London publishers is projecting a new "periodical," to appear on the first of January next; that which he started on the first of *last* January having, of course, died of old age ere this!

As to the external appearance of London this month, the East End of it shows symptoms of reviving animation, after the two months' trance which the absence of its citizens had cast over it; and Cheapside, though it cannot boast of being absolutely impassable, is sufficiently crowded to create hopes in its inhabitants that it soon will be.

But the West End is as melancholy as the want of that which ever makes it otherwise can render it: for the fashionables, though it is more than a month since they retired from the fatiguing activity of a London Winter in July, to

the still more fatiguing repose of an October Summer in the Country, pertinaciously refuse themselves permission to return to the lesser evil of the two, till they have partaken of the greater to such a degree of repletion as to make them fancy, when the former is on the point of being restored to them, that it is none at all; thus making each re-act upon the other, until, to their enfeebled and diseased imaginations, "nothing is but what is not;" and being in London, they sigh for the Country; and in the Country, for London.

But has London no one positive merit in October, then? Yes; one it has, which half redeems all its delinquencies. In October, Fires have fairly gained possession of their places, and even greet us on coming down to breakfast in the morning. Of all the discomforts of that most comfortless period of the London year which is neither winter nor summer, the most unequivocal is that of its being too cold to be without a fire, and not cold enough to have one. At a season of this kind, to enter an English sitting-room, the very ideal of snugness and comfort in all other respects, but with a great gaping hiatus in

one side of it, which makes it look like a pleasant face deprived of its best feature, is not to be thought of without feeling chilly. And as to filling up the deficiency by a set of polished fire-irons, standing sentry beside a pile of dead coals imprisoned behind a row of glittering bars,—this, instead of mending the matter, makes it worse; inasmuch as it is better to look into an empty coffin, than to see the dead face of a friend in it. At the season in question, especially in the evening, one feels in a perpetual perplexity, whether to go out or stay at home; sit down or walk about; read, write, cast accounts, or call for the candle and go to bed. But let the fire be lighted, and all uncertainty is at an end, and we (or even *one*) may do any or all of these with equal satisfaction. In short, light but the fire, and you bring the Winter in at once; and what are twenty Summers, with all their sunshine (when they are gone), to one Winter, with its indoor sunshine of a sea-coal fire?

Henceforth, then, be Winter my theme; and if I do not grow warm in its praise, it shall not be for want of inditing that praise beside as pleasant a fire as nubbly Wall's Ends, a register-

stove (not a Cobbett's-Register one, I am sorry to say*), and a slim-pointed poker, can produce.

* I modestly propose, that the stoves lately introduced by Mr. Cobbett, and recommended in his Register, be henceforth known by no other than the above style and title:—Cobbett's-Register Stoves. And if they are, it shall never be said that, anonymous as I am, I have lived or written in vain; for the next best thing to *having* a name, is the being able to *give* one, even to a fire-place. Let me add, for fear of being taxed with that meanest of all our mental propensities, the habit of joking at the expense of justice, that I offer the proposed name as any thing but a "nick" one. In fact, nothing but that change of climate which the Quarterly Reviewers have promised us can prevent Mr. Cobbett's stoves from one day or other gaining him almost as sure a passport to immortality, as any other of his works.

NOVEMBER.

Of the twin maxims, which bid us to "Welcome the coming, speed the going guest," the latter is better appreciated than practised. The over refinements of modern life make people afraid of giving in to it, who yet feel it to be an excellent one. The truth is, that when a guest, of no matter how agreeable a presence, or how attractive an air, has made up his mind to go, the sooner he goes the better. Let him go at once, therefore. Do not press him to stay, or detain him at the door, but "speed" him on his way. It is best for both parties, if they like each other. When, indeed, an unpleasant intruder is about to depart, there is a kind of satisfaction in detaining him a little. We dally with the prospective pleasure of having him gone, till we forget that he is present. But when those we love are leaving us, the best way is, to wink, and part at once; for to be "going" is even worse than to be "gone."

Thus let it be, then, with that delightful

annual guest, the Summer (under the agreeable alias of Autumn), in whose presence we have lately been luxuriating. We might perhaps, by a little gentle violence, prevail upon her to stay with us for a brief space longer; or might at least prevail upon ourselves to believe that she is not quite gone. But we shall do better by speeding her on her way to other climes, and welcoming "the coming guest," gray-haired Winter. So be it, then.

The last storm of Autumn, or the first of Winter, call it which you will, has strewed the bosom of the all-receiving earth with the few leaves that were still clinging, though dead, to the already sapless branches; and now all stand bare at once,—spreading out their innumerable ramifications against the cold, gray sky, as if sketched there for a study, by the pencil of your only successful drawing-mistress—Nature. Of all the numerous changes that are perpetually taking place in the general appearance of rural scenery during the year, there is none so striking as this which is attendant on the falling of the leaves; and there is none in which the unpleasing effects so greatly predominate over the pleasing ones. To say truth, a Grove, denuded of its

late gorgeous attire, and instead of bowing majestically before the winds, standing erect and motionless while they are blowing through it, is "a sorry sight," and one upon which we will not dwell. But even this sad consequence of the coming on of Winter, sad in most of its mere visible effects, is not entirely without redeeming accompaniments; for in most cases it lays open to our view objects that we are glad to see again, if it be but in virtue of their association with past years; and in many cases it opens vistas into sweet distances that we had almost forgotten, and brings into view objects that we may have been sighing for the sight of all the Summer long. Suppose, for example, that the summer view from the windows of a favourite sleeping-room is bounded by a screen of shrubs, shelving upward from the turf, and terminating in a little copse of Limes, Beeches, and Sycamores—the prettiest boundary that can greet the morning glance, when the shutters are opened, and the Sun slants gaily in at them, as if glad to be again admitted. How pleasant is it,—when, as now, the winds of Winter have stripped the branches that thus bound our view in,—to spy

beyond them, as if through net-work, the sky-pointing spire of the distant village church, rising from behind the old Yew-tree that darkens its portal; and the trim parsonage beside it, its ivy-grown windows glittering perhaps in the early sun! Oh—none, but those who *will* see the good that is in everything, know how very few evils there are without some of it attendant on them.

But though the least pleasant sight connected with the coming on of Winter in this month is, to see the leaves, that have so gladdened the groves all the Summer long, falling everywhere around us, withered and dead,—that sight is accompanied by another which is too often overlooked. Though most of the leaves fall in Winter, and the stems and branches which they beautified stand bare, many of them remain all the year round, and look brighter and fresher now than they did in Spring, in virtue of the contrasts that are everywhere about them. Indeed the cultivation of Evergreens has become so general with us of late years, that the home enclosures about our country dwellings, from the proudest down to even the poorest, are seldom

to be seen without a plentiful supply, which we now, in this month, first begin to observe, and acknowledge the value of. It must be a poor plot of garden-ground indeed that does not now boast its clumps of Winter-blowing Laurestinus; its trim Holly-bushes, bright with their scarlet berries; or its tall Spruce Firs, shooting up their pyramid of feathery branches beside the low, ivy-grown porch.

Of this last-named profuse ornamenter of whatever is permitted to afford it support (the Ivy), we now too everywhere perceive the beautifully picturesque effects: though there is one effect of it, also perceived about this time, which I cannot persuade myself to be reconciled to: I mean where the trunk of a tall tree is bound about with Ivy almost to its top, which during the Summer has scarcely been distinguished as a separate growth, but which now, when the other leaves are fallen, and the outspread branches stand bare, offers to the eye, not a contrast, but a contradiction.

But let us not dwell on any thing in disfavour of Ivy,—which is one of the prime boasts of the village scenery of our island, and which, even at this season of the year, offers pictures to the eye

that cannot be paralleled elsewhere. Perhaps as a single object of sight, there is nothing which gives so much innocent pleasure to so many persons, as an English Village Church, when the Ivy has held undisputed possession of it for many years, and has hung its fantastic banners all about it. There is a charm about an object of this kind, which it is as difficult to resist as to explain the secret of. *We* will attempt neither; but instead, continue our desultory observations.

Now, as the branches become bare, another sight presents itself, which, trifling as it is, fixes the attention of all who see it, and causes a sensation equally difficult with the above satisfactorily to explain. I mean the Birds' nests that are seen here and there in the now transparent hedges, bushes, and copses. It is not difficult to conceive why this sight should make the heart of the schoolboy leap with an imaginative joy, as it brings before his eyes visions of five blue eggs lying sweetly beside each other, on a bed of moss and feathers; or as many gaping bills lifting themselves from out what seems one callow body. But we are, unhappily, not all schoolboys; and it is to be hoped not

many of us ever *have been* bird-nesting ones. And yet we all look upon this sight with a momentary interest, that few other so indifferent objects are capable of exciting. The wise may condescend to explain this interest, if they please, or if they can. But if they do, it will be for their own satisfaction, not ours, who are content to be pleased, without insisting on penetrating into the cause of our pleasure.

Now, the felling of Wood for the winter store commences; and, in a mild still day, the measured strokes of the Woodman's axe, heard far away in the thick Forest, bring with their sound an associated feeling, similar to that produced by a wreath of smoke rising from out the same scene: they tell us a tale of

"Uncertain dwellers in the pathless Woods."

The "busy flail," too, which is now in full employment, fills the air about the homestead with a pleasant sound, and invites the passer by to look in at the great open doors of the Barn, and see the Wheatstack reaching to the roof on either hand; the little pyramid of bright Grain behind the Threshers; the scattered ears between them, leaping and rustling beneath their fast-falling strokes; and the flail itself flying harmless round

the Labourers' heads, though seeming to threaten danger at every turn; while, outside, the flock of "barn-door" Poultry ply their ceaseless search for food, among the knee-deep straw; and the Cattle, all their summer frolics forgotten, stand ruminating beside the half-empty Hay-rack, or lean with inquiring faces over the gate that looks down into the Village, or away towards the distant Pastures.

Of the Birds that have hitherto made merry even at the approach of Winter, now all are silent; all save that one who now earns his title of "the Household Bird," by haunting the thresholds and window-cills, and casting side-long glances indoors, as if to reconnoitre the positions of all within, before the pinching frosts force him to lay aside his fears, and flit in and out silently, like a winged spirit. All are now silent except him; but *he*, as he sits on the pointed palings beside the doorway, or on the topmost twig of the little Black Thorn that has been left growing in the otherwise closely-clipt Hedge, pipes plaintive ditties with a low *inward* voice,—like that of a love-tainted maiden, as she sits apart from her companions, and sings soft melodies to herself, almost without knowing it.

Some of the other small Birds that winter with us, but have hitherto kept aloof from our dwellings, now approach them, and mope about among the House-sparrows, on the bare branches, wondering what has become of all the leaves, and not knowing one tree from another. Of these the chief are, the Hedge-sparrow, the Blue Titmouse, and the Linnet. These also, together with the Goldfinch, Thrush, Blackbird, &c. may still be seen rifling the hip and haw grown hedges of their scanty fruit. Almost all, however, even of those Singing-birds that do not migrate, except the Redbreast, Wren, Hedge-sparrow, and Titmouse, disappear shortly after the commencement of this month, and go no one knows whither. But the pert House-sparrow keeps possession of the Garden and Court-yard all the Winter; and the different species of Wagtails may be seen busily haunting the clear cold Spring-heads, and wading into the unfrozen water in search of their delicate food, consisting of insects in the *aurelia* state.

Now, the Farmer finishes all his out-of-door work before the frosts set in, and lays by his implements till the awakening of Spring calls him to his hand-labour again.

Now, the Sheep, all their other more natural

food failing, begin to be penned on patches of the Turnip-field, where they first devour the green tops joyfully, and then gradually hollow out the juicy root,—holding it firm with their feet, till nothing is left but the dry brown husk.

Now, the Herds stand all day long hanging their disconsolate heads beside the leafless Hedges, and waiting as anxiously, but as patiently too, to be called home to the hay-fed Stall, as they do in Summer to be driven afield.

Now, (for they will not be overlooked or forgotten, do what we will to dwell on other things), now come the true disagreeables of a Winter in the Country; and perhaps at no other time are they so determinate in making themselves felt, or is it so difficult to escape from them. And yet what are they after all, (*i. e.* after they are over) but wholesome bitters thrown occasionally into the cup of life, to keep the appetite in health, and give a true tone to those powers of enjoyment, upon which the luxuries of Summer would pall, if they were not frequently to pass away in fact, and exist only in fancy? We may talk as much as we will about the perpetual blue skies of Southern Italy, and enjoy them, if we please, in imagination. And we may even *wish* for them here, without any great harm, provided we are

content to do without them. But no Englishman, who was at once a lover of external Nature, and an attentive observer of her effects on his own heart and mind, ever, by absolute choice, determined to live away from his own variable climate, even *before* he had tried that of other countries, still less after. Even if there were nothing else to keep him at home, he would never consent to part with the perpetual *green* of his native Fields, in exchange for that perpetual *blue* with which it cannot coexist: and this, if for no other reason, because green is naturally a more grateful colour to the eye than blue. But, in fact, to those who have the means of enjoying all that England has the means of offering for enjoyment, its climate is the best in the world; and it is even that which, upon the whole, gives rise to the greatest number of beautiful natural appearances. We boast, not without reason, of our unrivalled skill in gardening, and our taste in taking advantage of the natural beauties of picturesque scenery. But we claim too much credit for ourselves, and give too little to our climate, for the creation of this taste. If we had lived under Italian or French skies, our Gardens and Pleasure-grounds would

have been Italian or French. Where can the Sunsets and Sunrisings of England be equalled in various beauty? But that beauty depends, in a great measure, on her mists, clouds, and exhalations. The countries of clear skies and unbroken sunshine scarcely know what a Rainbow is: and yet what pageant of the earth, the air, or the water, is like it? In short, the climate of England, like her people, is the best in the world; and what is more, the latter are the best precisely *because* the former is. And that this can be said with perfect sincerity, in the heart of the country during the heart of November, is a proof, not to be gainsaid, that the joint proposition is true.

Perhaps I may now safely return to my duty, of depicting the several unamiable aspects which the face of November is apt to assume; and which, in my lover-like disposition to "see Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt," I had serious thoughts of either passing over altogether, or denying the existence of outright!

Now, then (there is no denying it), cold rains do come deluging down, till the drenched ground, the dripping trees, the pouring eaves, and the torn ragged-skirted clouds, seemingly dragged

downward slantwise by the threads of dusky rain that descend from them, are all mingled together in one blind confusion; while the few Cattle that are left in the open Pastures, forgetful of their till now interminable business of feeding, turn their backs upon the besieging storm, and hanging down their heads till their noses almost touch the ground, stand out in the middle of the Fields motionless, like dead images.

Now, too, a single rain-storm, like the above, breaks up all the paths and ways at once, and makes home no longer "home" to those who are not obliged to leave it; while, *en revanche*, it becomes doubly endeared to those who are. What sight, for instance, is so pleasant to the wearied Woodman, who has been out all day long in the drenching rains of this month, as his own distant cottage window, seen through the thickening dusk, lighted up by the blazing faggot that is to greet his sure return at the accustomed minute? What, I say, is so pleasant a sight as this, except the window of the village alehouse, similarly seen, and offering a similar greeting, to him who has *no* home?

The name of home warns us that we are too

long delaying our approach to its environs, even though they have little to offer us different from the comparative desolation that prevails elsewhere.

In short, the Fruits of the Orchard are all gathered in, and all but the keeping ones are gone; and the Flowers of the Garden are gradually growing thinner and thinner, and the places where they lately stood are forgotten.

Still, however, of the former we have the Winter store, laid by in fragrant heaps in the low-roofed loft over the Granary; and of the latter we have yet left some that scatter their till now neglected beauties up and down the half-deserted Parterre, and gain that admiration by their rarity, which in the presence of their more fleeting rivals they were fain to do without; and even a few that have not ventured to show their faces to the hot sun of Summer, but are bold enough to bare them before the chilling winds of Winter. Of these the most various and conspicuous are the Chrysanthemums, shooting out their sharp rays of different lengths, like stars—purple, and pink, and white, and yellow, and blue; but all pale, faint, and scentless, and looking more like artificial flowers than real ones.

Some of the rich Dahlias, too, still remain, unless the killing frosts have come; and the Geraniums, that have been turned out of their winter homes into the open earth, still keep flowering profusely. But a single night's frost makes sad havoc among both these bright ornaments of the Autumn Flower-garden; and what is to-day a rich cluster of green leaves, interspersed with gay groups of flowers, may to-morrow become, by an invisible agency, an unsightly heap of corruption.

London is so perfect an antithesis to the Country in all things, that whatever is good for the one is bad for the other. Accordingly, as the Country half forgets itself this month, so London just begins to know itself again. Not that I would insinuate any thing so injurious to the reputation of the high fashionables, as that they have as yet began to entertain the remotest thought of throwing themselves into the arms of one another, merely because they have become wearied of themselves. On the contrary, persons of fashion are perpetual martyrs to the selfdenying principles on which they act, of doing every thing for or with a reference to other people.

Every body knows, that if there *is* a month of the year in which the Country puts forth less claims than usual to the undivided love of her admirers, it is November. But people of fashion never yet pretended either to love or admire any thing—even themselves;—any thing but that abstraction of abstractions from which they take their title. Accordingly, to them the Country is as much the Country in November as ever it was, simply because London is not yet London. In short, to be in London, is to be *in the world;* and to be in the Country, or any where else but in London, is to be *out of the world;* and therefore, to say that one is "in the Country," when it is not decorous to be in London, is a mere *façon de parler*, exactly equivalent to that of "not at home," when one does not choose to be seen; so that there is no difficulty whatever in being "in town" all the year round, and yet "out of town," exactly when it is proper and becoming to be so.

But if the world of fashion belongs exclusively to London, luckily London does not belong exclusively to the world of fashion; and if that has not yet began to enlighten London with its presence, all the other worlds have. Accordingly,

now its streets revive from their late suspended animation, and are alive with anxious faces, and musical with the mingled sounds of many wheels.

Now, the Shops begin to shine out with their new Winter wares; though as yet the chief profits of their owners depend on disposing of the "Summer stock" at fifty per cent. under prime cost.

Now, the Theatres, admonished by their no longer empty benches, try which shall be the first to break through that hollow truce on the strength of which they have hitherto been acting only on alternate nights.

Now, during the first week, the citizens see visions and dream dreams, the burthens of which are Barons of Beef; and the first eight days are passed in a state of pleasing perplexity, touching their chance of a ticket for the Lord Mayor's Dinner on the ninth.

Now, all the little boys give thanks in their secret hearts to Guy Faux, for having attempted to burn "the Parliament" with "Gunpowder, treason, and plot," since the said attempt gives them occasion to burn every thing they can lay their hands on,—their own fingers included: a bonfire being, in the eyes of an English school-

boy, the true "beauteous and sublime of human life."

Finally,—now the atmosphere of London begins to thicken overhead, and assume its *natural* appearance—preparatory to its becoming, about Christmas time, that "palpable obscure" which is one of its proudest boasts; and which, among its other merits, may reckon that of engendering those far-famed Fogs of which everybody has heard, but to which no one has ever done justice. A London Fog in November is a thing for which I have a sort of natural affection;—to say nothing of an acquired one, the result of a Hackney-coach adventure, in which the fair part of the fare threw herself into my arms for protection, amidst the pleasing horrors of an overthrow.—As an affair of mere breath, there is something tangible in a London Fog. In the evanescent air of Italy, a man might as well not breathe at all, for any thing he knows of the matter. But in a well-mixed Metropolitan Fog there is something substantial, and satisfying. You can feel what you breathe, and see it too. It is like breathing water,—as we may fancy the fishes to do. And then the taste of it, when dashed with a due seasoning of sea-coal smoke, is far from

insipid. It is also meat and drink at the same time; something between egg-flip and omelette soufflée, but much more digestible than either. Not that I would recommend it medicinally,—especially to persons of queasy stomachs, delicate nerves, and afflicted with bile. But for persons of a good robust habit of body, and not dainty withal—(which such, by the by, never are)—there is nothing better in its way. And it wraps you all round like a cloak, too—a patent water-proof one, which no rain ever penetrated.

No—I maintain that a real London Fog is a thing not to be sneezed at—if you can help it.

Mem. As many spurious imitations of the above are abroad,—such as Scotch Mists, and the like—which are no less deleterious than disagreeable,—please to ask for the "True London Particular," as manufactured by Thames, Coal-gas, Smoke, Steam, and Co. No others are genuine.

DECEMBER.

My pleasant task approaches to its pleasant close; for it is pleasant to approach the close of *any* task—even a pleasant one. The beautiful Spring is almost forgotten in the anticipation of that which is to come. The bright Summer is no more thought of, than is the glow of the morning sunshine at night-fall. The rich Autumn only just lingers on the memory, as the last red rays of its evenings do when they have but just quitted the eye. And Winter is once more closing his cloud-canopy over all things, and breathing forth that sleep-compelling breath which is to wrap all in a temporary oblivion, no less essential to their healthful existence than is the active vitality which it for a while supersedes.

Of the mere external appearances and operations of Nature I shall have comparatively little to say in connexion with this month, because many of the former have been anticipated in

January, while the latter is for the most part a negation throughout the whole realms of animate as well as inanimate nature.

The Meadows are still green—almost as green as in the Spring, with the late-sprouted grass that the last rains have called up, since it has been fed off, and the Cattle called home to enjoy their winter fodder. The Corn-fields, too, are bright with their delicate sprinkling of young autumn-sown Wheat; the ground about the Hedge-rows, and in the young Copses, is still pleasant to look upon, from the sobered green of the hardy Primrose and Violet, whose clumps of unfading leaves brave the utmost rigour of the season; and every here and there a bush of Holly darts up its pyramid of shining leaves and brilliant berries, from amidst the late wild and wandering, but now faded and forlorn company of Woodbines and Eglantines, which have all the rest of the year been exulting over and almost hiding it, with their quick-growing branches and flaunting flowers. The Evergreens, too, that assist in forming the home enclosures, have altogether lost that sombre hue which they have until lately worn—sombre in comparison with the bright freshness of Spring and the splendid

variety of Autumn; and now, that not a leaf is left around them, they look as gay by the contrast as they lately looked grave.

Now, the high-piled Turnip cart is seen labouring along the narrow lanes, or stands ready with its white load in the open field, waiting to be borne to the expectant Cattle that are safely stalled and sheltered for the season; while, for the few that are still permitted to remain at the mercy of the inclement skies, and to make their unwholesome bed upon the drenched earth, the moveable Hay-rack is daily filled with its fragrant store, and the open shed but poorly supplies the place of the warm and well-roofed stalls of the Straw-yard.

Now, too, some of the younger members of the herd (for the old ones know by experience that it is not worth the trouble), seeing the tempting green of the next field through the leafless Hedge-rows, break their way through, and find the fare as bitter and as scanty as that which they have left.

Now, the Hazels throw out their husky blossoms from their bare branches,—looking, as they hang straight down, like a dark rain arrested in its descent; and the Furze flings out its bright

yellow flowers upon the otherwise bare common, like little gleams of sunshine; and the Moles ply their mischievous night-work in the dry meadows; and the green Plover "whistles o'er the lea;" and the Snipes haunt the marshy grounds; and the Wag-tails twinkle about near the spring-heads; and the Larks get together in companies, and talk to each other, instead of singing to themselves; and the Thrush occasionally puts forth a plaintive note, as if half afraid of the sound of his own voice; and the Hedge-sparrow and Titmouse try to sing; and the Robin does sing still, even more delightfully than he has done during all the rest of the year, because it now seems as if he sang for us rather than for himself—or rather *to* us, for it is still for his supper that he sings, and therefore for himself.

There is no place so desolate as the Orchard this month; for none of the fruit-trees have any beauty *as trees*, at their best; and now, they have not a leaf left to cover their unsightly nakedness.

Not so with the Kitchen Garden; *that*, if it has been duly attended to, is full of interest this month,—especially by comparison with the scenes of decay and barrenness by which it is

surrounded. The Fruit Trees on the walls are all nailed out with the most scrupulous regularity; and by them, as much as by any thing else, may you now judge of the skill and assiduity of your gardener. Indeed this is of all others the month in which *his* merits are put to the test, and in which they often seem to vie with those of Nature herself. Anybody may have a handsome garden from May to September; but only those who deserve one can have it from September to May. Now, then, the walls are all covered with their wide-spread fruit fans; the Celery beds stretch out their unbroken lines of fresh-looking green; the late-planted Lettuces look trim and erect upon the sheltered borders where they are to stand the Winter, and be ready, not to open, but to shut up their young hearts at the first warm breath of Spring; the green strings of autumn-sown Peas scarcely lift their tender downward-turning stems above the dark soil; the hardy Endives spread out their now full-grown heads of fantastically curled leaves, or stand tied up from the sun and air, doing the penance necessary to acquire for them that agreeable state of unhealthiness without which (like modern fine ladies who contrive to blanch them-

selves in a similar manner, and by similar means) our squeamish appetites could not relish them; the Cauliflower, Brocoli, and Kale plants, maintain their unbroken ranks; and, finally, even the Cabbages themselves (Mr. Brummel being self-banished to Boulogne, and therefore not within hearing, I may venture to say it), even the young Cabbages themselves contrive to look genteel, in virtue of their as yet heartless state; which is, in fact, the secret of all gentility, whether in a Cabbage or a Countess.

As to the Flower-garden this month, it looks a picture either of pleasantness or of poverty, according to the degree of care and skill which has been bestowed upon it; for though Nature wills that we shall enjoy her beauties during a certain period of the year, whether we use any efforts towards the obtaining them or not, yet she lays it down as a general principle, in regard to her gifts, that to seek them, is at once to deserve, to have, and to enjoy them; and that without such seeking, we shall only have just enough to make us sigh after more. Accordingly, her sun shines with equal warmth upon the Gardens of the just and the unjust; and her rains fertilise the Fields of all alike. In short, as it is with

the loveliest of her works, Woman, her favours are to be obtained by assiduous seeking alone; her love is the reward, not of riches, nor beauty, nor power, nor even of virtue, but of love alone. No man ever gave a woman his entire love, and sought hers in return, that he did not, to a certain extent, obtain it; and no man ever paid similar court to Nature, and came away empty handed.

But we are wandering from the Garden; which should not be, even at this least attractive of all its seasons; for though the honours which it offers to the close of the year cannot vie with those which it scatters so profusely about the footsteps of the Spring, we shall find them full of interest and beauty, where we find them at all.

Now, then, if the frosts have not set in, the Garden contains, or ought to contain, a numerous variety of the Chinese Chrysanthemums, which resemble and take the place of the more glaring, but less delicately constructed China-asters. The most beautiful of these is the Snow-white, looking, with its radii of different lengths, like a lighted catherine-wheel. To have these in any perfection, however, their growth must have been a little retarded by art; for their natural time of blowing is during the last

month. But it must be remembered, that the Winter Garden is an affair of Art assisted by Nature, rather than of Nature assisted by Art. So that I doubt, after all, whether I shall not be overstepping the path I had marked out for myself, in describing what a Winter Garden *may be.* As this is what I would, above all things, avoid, let me at once refrain from pointing out any thing but what *must* be found in my prototype, Nature, under ordinary circumstances; for I would rather omit from my portraits much of what their originals do contain, than introduce into them any thing that they do not. And, even with this restriction, we shall find the Garden replete with pleasant objects.

The Annuals, even the latest blowing, have all been rooted up, and thier straggling stems cleared away; all, except perhaps a few lingering Marigolds, and some clumps of Mignonette, that will go on blowing till the frost cuts them off. The Geraniums that were turned into the open ground in the Autumn, to fill up the vacancies left by the falling off of the early annuals, are still in flower, always provided there has not yet been a night's sharp frost: if there has, they have all withered beneath its (to them) baleful influence, as if by

magic. The same may be said of the Dahlias, with this difference,—that the destruction of their luxuriant upper and visible growth is but the renewal of the vigorous vitality that lies hid for a season in their self-generating roots.

Now, the Monthly, or China Rose, begins to be again appreciated. It has been flowering all the Summer long for its own peculiar satisfaction, and almost unnoticed amidst the flush of fresher looking beauty that surrounded it. But now, its pale blossoms, with their faint perfume, are the favourites of the Garden; and a whole company of them, wreathing about a low trellised porch, make a momentary Summer in the most wintry of scenes.

Finally, now, every here and there, start up those stray gifts which have "no business" to be seen at this season, but which, like fragments of blue sky scattered among black overhanging clouds, remind us of the beautiful whole to which they belong. I mean the little precocious Primroses, Snowdrops, &c. that sometimes during this month find, or rather lose, their way from their Winter homes, where they ought now to be hiding, and peep up with their pale faces, as

if in search of that Spring which they will now never see.

If there is no denying that the Country is at its worst during this much abused month, it must be conceded, in return, that London is at its best: for at what other time is it so difficult and disagreeable to get along the streets? and when are they so perfumed with the peculiar odour of their own mud, and is their atmosphere so rich in the various "choice compounds" with which it always abounds?

But even these are far from being the prime merits of the Metropolis, at this season of its best Saturnalia. The little boys from school have again taken undisputed possession of all its pleasant places; and the loud laughter of unchecked joy once more explodes on spots from whence, with these exceptions, it has long since been exploded. In short, Christmas, which has been "coming" all the year (like a waiter at an inn), is at last actually come; and "merry England" is, for a little while, no longer a phrase of mockery and scorn.

The truth is, we English have fewer faults

than any other people on earth; and even among those which we have, our worst enemies will not impute to us an idle and insane levity of deportment. We still for the most part, as we did five hundred years ago, *nous amusons tristement, sélon l'usage de notre pays.* We do our pleasures, as we do our duties, with grave faces and solemn airs, and disport ourselves in a manner becoming our notions of the dignity of human nature. We feel at the theatre as if it were a church, and consequently at church as if it were a theatre. Our processions to a rout move at the same rate as those to a funeral, and there are, in proportion, as many sincere mourners at the former as the latter. We dance on the same principle as that on which our soldiers do the manual exercise; and there is as much (and as little) of impulse in the one as the other. And we fight on the same principle as we dance; namely, because circumstances require it of us.

All this is true of us under ordinary circumstances. But the arrival of Christmas-time is *not* an ordinary circumstance; and therefore *now* it is none of it true. We are merry-makers once more, and feel that we can now afford to play the fool for a week, since we have so re-

ligiously persisted in playing the philosopher during all the rest of the year. Be it expressly understood, however, by all those "surrounding nations" who may happen to meet with this candid confession of our weakness in the above particular, that we permit ourselves to fall into it in favour of our children alone. They (poor things!) being as yet at so pitiable a distance from "years of discretion," cannot be supposed to have achieved the enviable discovery, that happiness is a thing utterly beneath the attention of a reasoning and reasonable being. Accordingly, they know no medium between happiness and misery; and when they are not enjoying the one, they are suffering the other.

But that English parents, generally speaking, love their children better than themselves, is another national merit which I must claim for them. The consequence of this is natural and necessary, and brings us safely round to the point from which we started: an English father and mother, rather than their offspring should not be happy at Christmas-time, will consent to be happy at that time themselves! It does not last long; and surely a week or so spent in a state of foolish felicity may hope to be expiated

by a whole year of unimpeachable indifference! This, then, is the secret of the Christmas holiday-making, among the "better sort" of English families,—as they are pleased somewhat invidiously to call themselves.

Now, then (to resume our details), "the raven down" of metropolitan darkness is "smoothed" every midnight "till it smiles," by that pleasant relic of past times, "the waits;" which wake us with their low wild music mingling with the ceaseless sealike sound of the streets; or (still better) lull us to sleep with the same; or (best of all) make us dream of music all night long, without waking us at all.

Now, too, the Bellman plies his more profitable but less pleasant parallel with the above; nightly urging his "masters and mistresses" to the practice of every virtue under heaven, and in his own mind prospectively including them all in the pious act of adding an extra sixpence to his accustomed stipend.

Now, during the first week, the Theatres having begun to prepare "the Grand Christmas Pantomime, which has been in active preparation all the Summer," the Carpenter for the time being, among other ingenious changes which he

contemplates, looks forward with the most lively satisfaction to that which is to metamorphose *him* (in the play-bills at least) into a "machinist;" while, pending the said preparations, even the "Stars" of the Company are "shorn of their beams" (at least in making their transit through that part of their hemisphere which is included behind the scenes), and all things give way before the march of that monstrous medley of "inexplicable dumb show and noise," which is to delight the Galleries and Dress-circle, and horrify the more *genteel* portion of the audience, for the next nine weeks.

Finally, now occur, just before Christmas, those exhibitions which are peculiar to England in the nineteenth century; I mean the Prize-Cattle Shows. "Extremes meet;" and accordingly, one of the most unequivocal evidences we have to offer, of the surpassing refinement of the age in which we live, consists in these displays of the most surpassing grossness. The alleged *beauty* of these unhappy victims of their own appetites acting with a view to ours, consists in their being unable to perform a single function of their nature, or enjoy a single moment of their lives; and the value of the meat that they make

is in exact proportion to the degree in which it is *un*fit to be eaten.

To describe the joys and jollifications attendant on Christmas, is what my confined limits would counsel me not to attempt, even if they were describable matters. But, in fact, there is nothing which affords such truly "lenten entertainment" as a feast at secondhand: the Barmecide's dishes were fattening by comparison with it. In conclusion, therefore, let me say that I shall think it very hard, if the gentle readers of these pen and ink sketches of the Months have not been persuaded, during the perusal of each, that I have fulfilled my promise made at the commencement, of proving each, in its turn, to be better than all the rest. At any rate, if they are not so persuaded, they must, to be consistent, henceforth abandon all pretended *admiration*,—which is an affair of impulse, not of judgment,—and must proceed to *compute* the value of every thing that comes before them, according to its comparative value in regard to some other thing. In short, they must at once adopt Horace's hateful worldly-minded maxim of "nil admirari" &c. as rendered still more hateful and worldly-minded by Bolingbroke and Pope's version of

it; and must "make up their minds," as the mechanical phrase is, that not merely "not to *wonder*," (which is what Horace meant, if he meant any thing) but

> "Not to *admire*, is all the art *they* know,
> To make men happy, and to keep them so."

But, in truth, as it is only for the satisfaction of living friends and lovers that people sit for their portraits; not to gratify the spleen of cavilling critics, nor even to convey their effigies to a posterity that will not care a penny about them; so it is only to please the friends and lovers of Nature, that I have painted the merely natural portion of these "pictures in little" of the Months.

As to the artificial portions,—being of no use to any one else, the posterity of a twelvemonth hence is welcome to them, as records of the manners of the day, caught, not "*living* as they *rise*," but dying as they fall: for in the gardens of Fashion and Folly there are happily no perennials; and though the plants which grow there for the most part belong to that species which have winged seeds, and therefore disperse themselves to wheresoever the winds of heaven blow, the same provision causes them to escape

from the spot where they sprang up, and make way for those which the chances and changes of the season may have deposited there. Thus each plant in turn has its day; and each parterre has an annual opportunity of priding itself upon an exhibition of specimens, which last year it would have laughed at, and which next year it will despise. And "thus runs the world (of Fashion) away."

But not so with the world of Nature. Here, all as surely returns as it passes away; and whatever is true in these papers in regard to that, will be true of it while time shall last. Wishing my readers, therefore, "many happy returns of the *present* season" (meaning whichever it may happen to be during which they are favouring these light leaves with a perusal), let me conclude by counselling such of them (if any there be) as have hitherto failed to appreciate and enjoy the good that is every where scattered about them, not to waste themselves away in vain regrets over what cannot be recalled, but hasten to atone to that Nature which they have neglected, by making the Future repay them for the Past, until their reckoning of happiness is

even. Of this they may be assured, that it is rarely if ever too late to do so, and that the human mind never parts with the power of righting itself, so long as "the human heart by which we live" is not wilfully closed against the counsel which comes to it from all external things.

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